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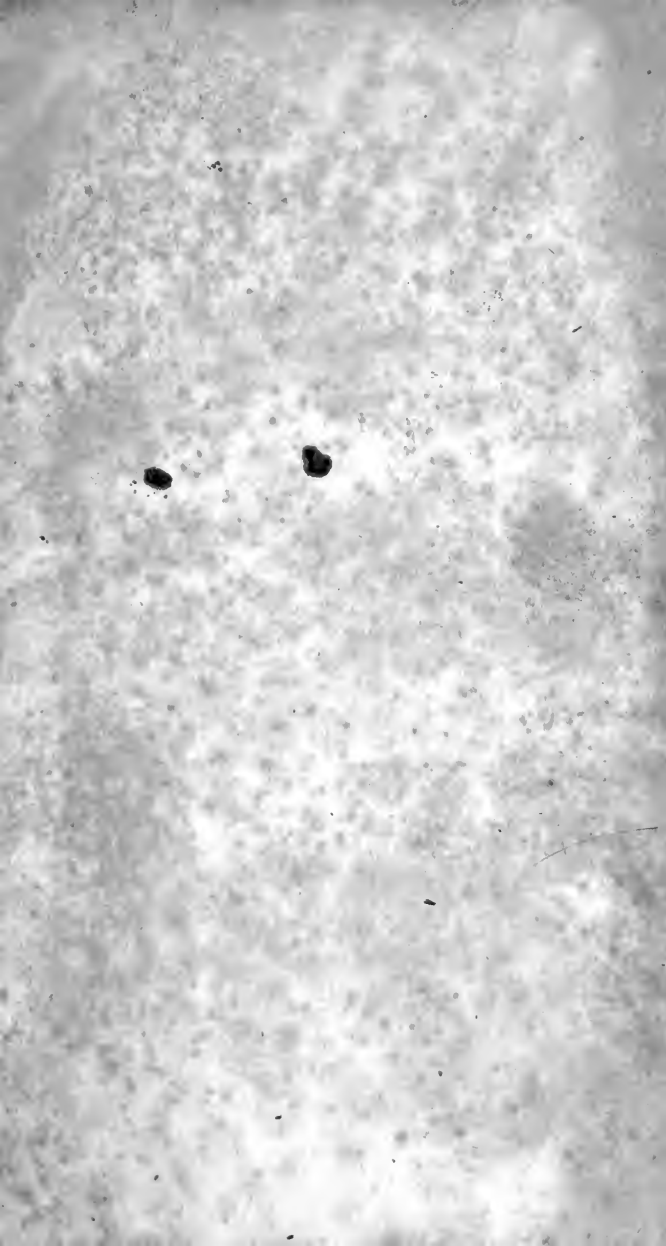
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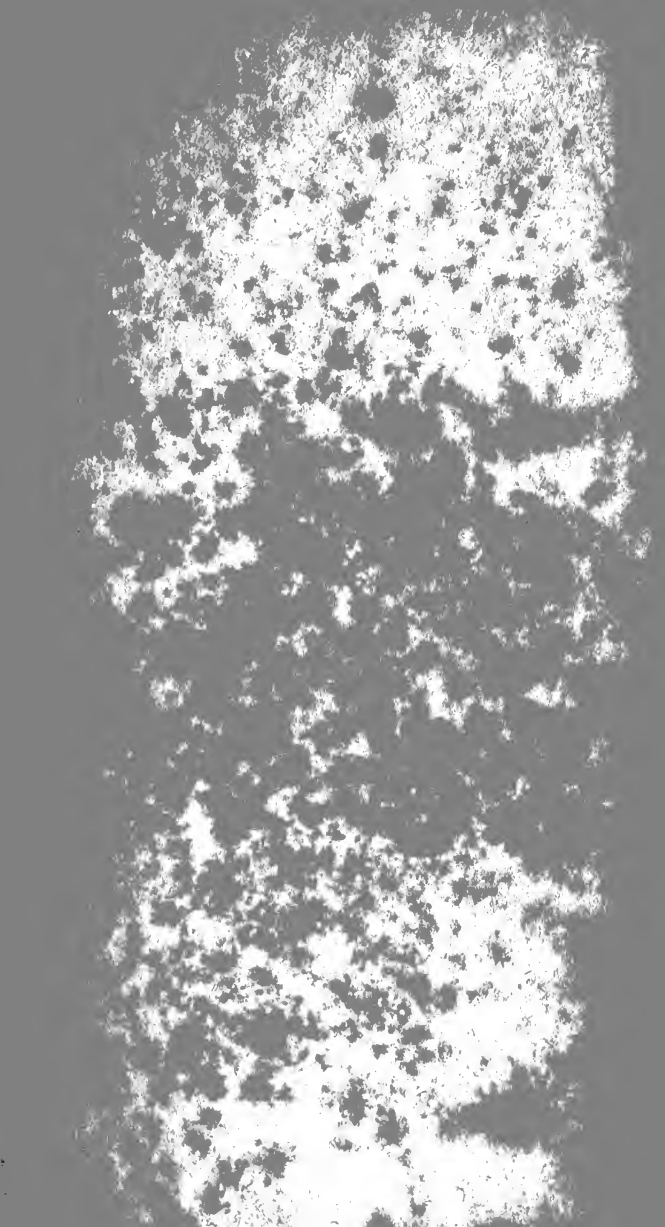
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A
GOSPEL GLASS:
REPRESENTING
The Miscarriages
OF
ENGLISH PROFESSORS, &c.

John Breckinridge
GOSPEL GLASS:
REPRESENTING
The Miscarriages
OF

ENGLISH PROFESSORS,

OR, A

CALL FROM HEAVEN

TO

SINNERS AND SAINTS,

BY

Repentance and Reformation

TO

PREPARE TO MEET GOD:

BY LEWIS STUCKLEY.

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart : Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Lev. xix. 27.

Yet thou sayest, because I am innocent surely his anger shall turn from me : Behold I will plead with thee, because thou sayest I have not sinned. Jer. ii. 35.

A NEW EDITION,

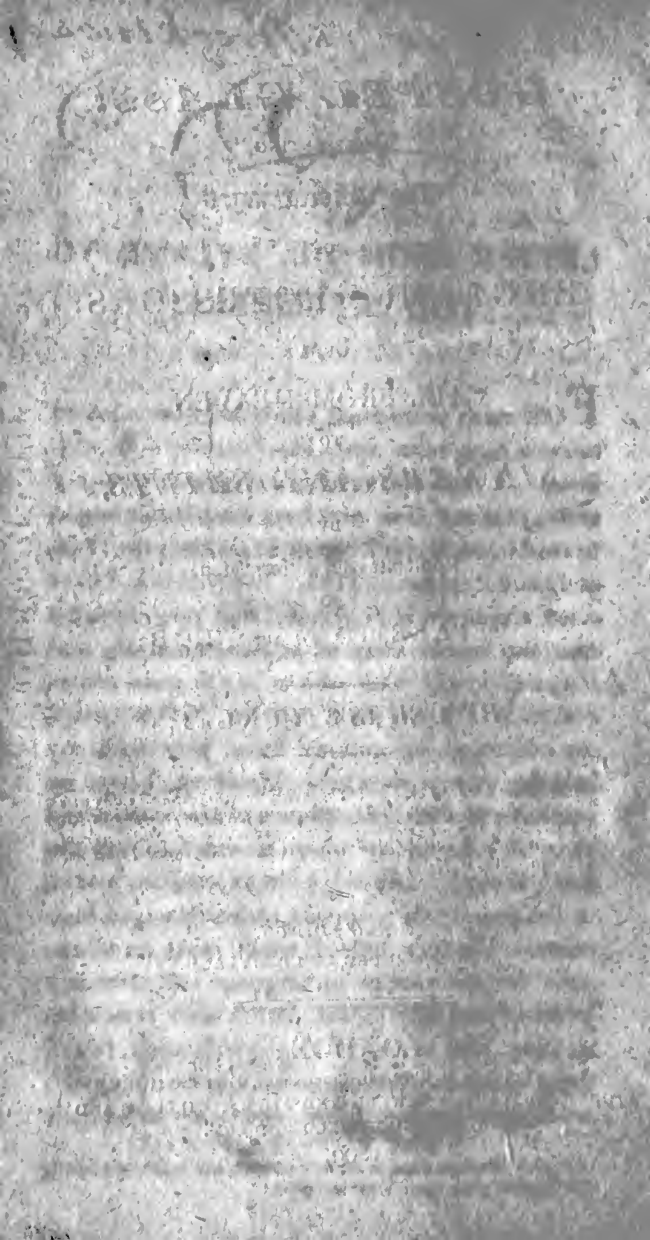
RECOMMENDED BY DR. RYLAND.

LONDON :

Printed by R. Edwards, Crane Court, Fleet Street;
FOR W. SUTTABY, MAXWELL AND WILSON, WILLIAMS AND
SMITH, AND BYFIELD AND SON.

1809.

John Breckinridge.



LETTER FROM DR. RYLAND TO THE PUBLISHERS.

FOR many years past, I have been accustomed to set a high value upon Mr. Stuckley's Gospel-Glass. I find by notes in the margin of my copy, that my dear and honoured father began to read it, with much attention, in the year 1745, and gave it to me in 1771. In my youth, I have often employed it in private, as a very valuable assistant in the duty of self-examination, and frequently read parts of it to my friends, or recommended it to their perusal. Of late years, my numerous avocations have prevented my looking into it so often. However, I have no suspicion that my general idea of the work would be at all altered, by the most careful examination ; though I dare say, a few expressions would, in the present day, appear rather low and ludicrous. Candour, indeed, would make an allowance for the change of language and taste in a hundred and fifty years ; but I well remember wishing, that in case of its re-publication, two or three of the coarsest phrases might be changed*, as liable to just exception, and likely to be quite

* This has been done in a few instances, and is the only liberty the Editors have taken with the work.

offensive to a fastidious reader. The practice of sin, and the devices of Satan, cannot be too fully exposed; but sometimes a milder phrase may take faster hold of the conscience than one more severe; and though they are fools that laugh at sin, yet a wise reprover must take care not to give them a handle, who had much rather laugh at a quaint reproof than weep for themselves. Nothing could be more remote from the object of the writer, than to excite any thing like levity in the minds of his readers; though he lived twenty years after he wrote this book, he was very ill at the time it was written, and to his own apprehension, under sentence of death. A sketch of his life may be given from Mr. Palmer's Non-conformist's Memorial, which I fear could not now be enlarged from any other source of information:

I pray that a divine blessing may attend the re-publication of this excellent, pungent, and heart-searching work, and may the professors of evangelical religion be careful to depart from all iniquity, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

JOHN RYLAND.

Bristol, March 12, 1809.

THE
AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

WHEN it is a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, *then* (saith the prophet) blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble. How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger? He hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden; he hath destroyed the places of the assembly: the Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger, his priests. Yea, the Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, the law is no *more*, her prophets also find no vision from the Lord. O that now mine eyes could fail with tears, and my bowels were more troubled within me! O that my liver were poured out upon the earth for the destruction of the daughter of my people, because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city! We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.

When we, like David, were restoring the ark of God, I mean the presence of Christ, in his worship and ordinances, what stumblings of the oxen have we seen? What miserable disappointments have we met with? And what sad breaches have there been made? How hath God stopped our way, and branded our enterprises with wonderful remarks of his sore displeasure?

Hear therefore the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel, for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. We poor ministers have pleaded with you, till we can plead no more: the Lord hath bid us stand by, whilst he himself takes up the controversy. O, is it not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God? Are you not sensible what arrows God hath begun to shoot amongst us? How many thousands and ten thousands hath he taken away as with a whirlwind, by the pestilence? For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. How hath God shaken our heavens, and our earth; the sea as well as dry land? How doth he contend still by the sword? And how much precious blood hath the earth and sea drunk up? For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

O! come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. Every providence of God (especially his more notable acts) hath a reason written upon it, could man's eye read it. When the church complained that God was as a stranger in the land, and as a way-faring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night: the Lord replies to them, Thus have they loved to wander, &c. The controversy began on their side: they may see their sin in their punishment, as in a glass. Do they wonder I grow strange to them? The estrangement began

on their part. Nothing appears more our instant duty, than to enter a serious scrutiny, What have we done? wherein have we offended? Let us search and try our ways, (saith the afflicted church of Judah, upon this very occasion, of the Lord's discovering himself with a cloud, that their prayers could not pass through) and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart, with our hands, unto God in the heavens. O! consider your ways: *The Lord doubleth it,* Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

I find men will easily subscribe to this, that sin is the procuring cause of all misery; but I find an aptness to transfer the guilt from one to another, from one party to another; and though people do even sell themselves to work wickedness, yet so predominant is self-love, that it sees no spots in itself. Ahab is not the troubler of Israel, but Elijah: Nay, a good man, Aaron ex-cuseth himself, and lays the blame on others. The sin is theirs, not mine. Men have a natural desire to justify themselves, and their desire is so strong, that they care not whom they bespatter or burden, so they may but ease and acquit themselves.

And indeed, sin is such an ugly monster, that no man will own it, if he can choose; but had rather lay this child of darkness at any man's door, yea at God's than father it himself.

My design in this enterprise, is, to obviate this distemper, and to bring you, all of you, to own your iniquity; that you may say (resolve upon it) that you will confess your iniquity, that so God may forgive the iniquity of your sin. My place, and duty, as a minister (though wholly unworthy of that relation to God and

you) binds me to cause Jerusalem to know her abominations ; and therefore I have descended to particulars, that, if it be the will of God, I might hit the humour, and shew to every man the plague of his own heart.

The Lord knoweth, I take no pleasure to rake in these dunghills : I dread the ill uses that the sons of Belial may make of this enterprise : I expect various censures from them, who should be otherwise minded ; but my record is on high, that the great design of this publication is, to reduce professors to a more awful, humble, serious repentance towards God, and singular conversation before men.

I thank God for the freedom that a reverend brother hath taken with the ejected ministers : and I must profess, that since the perusal of that most seasonable piece, I have had no quiet in my conscience, till I entered upon this labour. Though my bodily distempers pleaded loud for my silence : though I was told, the prudent should hold their peace in an evil day ; though I know it is an unthankful office to admonish and reprove, &c. yet I have laid by all impediments and objections that self was obtruding ; and wish I had such gifts, and such affections, and such a discerning of the hearts and lives of professors, as might render me some way useful, to put you upon self-reflection, upon self-trial in order to a full repentance : I pray God, I may so far at least succeed, as to obstruct that cursed exclaiming against the sins of governors ; and the sins of divided parties ; as at length to make you cry out, What have I done ? O ! how have I provoked God ?

Out of pity to your souls have I undertaken this subject : our pangs, like those of a travailing woman, are hastening : the clouds are swell-

ling, I am loath they should fall on you in a secure and impenitent condition : I am not ashamed to tell you, that I foresee foul weather ; and I would you should be in readiness for boisterous seas. I know nothing, save guilt, will then sink your hearts : the load of affliction will be so heavy and hard upon you, that I would have nothing else (not the load of millions of unrepented sins) at the same time to press down. Sins unrepented of, will soon, as poison, drink up your spirits. If sin be confessed, and repented of, if God hath forgiven, no matter what loads lie upon the back, seeing no guilt lies upon the conscience.

Having given you an account of my design, and the reason of it, I shall only add,

1. That it may not be expected I should give you a full catalogue of all your sins, which are provocations in the eyes of the Lord this day. Who can understand his errors ? Cleanse thou me (and the land) from all our secret, as well as known faults.

2. God forbid I should be so censorious, as to judge all professors guilty of these sins, in all the particularities, or in all the aggravations of them. Some are charged one way, some another : few can wash their hands in innocency, that they are no ways principals or accessories.

3. Far be it from me to be partial in my charge, to advance any faction of men upon the ruins of their brethren.

4. I desire you would take this catalogue into your closets with you, and as you read, set a special mark of observation on those sins, which are chiefly your's in order to repentance, and amendment, and then give the Lord no rest, till he hath taken his pen, and dipped it in the blood of his Son, and blotted them out of his diary, and remembrance.

5. And lastly, let me beseech the reader, to be very importunate with the Lord, for an humble, tender spirit ; that prejudice, unbelief, and hardness of heart, may not accompany him in the perusal of the following lines, and thereby, both his, and my own endeavours, become abortive.

L. S.

BRIEF ACCOUNT

OF THE

AUTHOR.

THE Rev. LEWIS STUCKLEY, author of the ensuing treatise, descended from an honourable family in the county of Devon. The family seat was at Afton, in West Worlington ; and is said to have had thirteen manors depending upon it, within sight of the gate-house. One of his ancestors was standard-bearer to queen Elizabeth ; his elder brother was Sir Thomas Stuckley. The circumstances attending his birth, education, and early life, are involved in oblivion, which is the more to be lamented, as the treatise now offered to the public discovers him to have been a man of considerable abilities.

As Mr. Stuckley is not mentioned by Anthony Wood in his account of the Oxford writers, it is highly probable that he pursued his academical studies in the university of Cambridge. The

first mention we find made of him in public, is in 1646, in the July of which year, the standing committee of Devon, ordered him into the living of Newton-Ferrers, near Plymouth; but whether he ever took possession of it seems uncertain. In the same year he was appointed to the living of Great Torrington, as appears from Dr. Walker, who says, "Mr. Theophilus Powel was turned out of Great Torrington, about the year 1646, and was then succeeded by the famous independent, Mr. Lewis Stuckley." It appears from the same author, that previous to this he was in the living of Tiverton, in the same county, where he succeeded a Mr. George Pierce; and that he succeeded Mr. Richard Newte, in the sequestered livings of Tidcomb, and Clare. "Mr. Newte (says that author) had one Mr. Stuckley thrust upon him, to supply half the cure, when the *godly* compelled him to live at the rate of one hundred pounds a year." It seems, also, that he was some time at St. Sidwell's; for the same writer says, "Mr. William Banks was restored to Heavitree, by the then growing interest of Mr. Stuckley, the afterwards famous independent, on condition that Stuckley should be placed in St. Sidwell's, a daughter church, belonging to that vicarage, out of which the Presbyterians had with might and main laboured to keep him. It is greatly to be lamented that we have no authentic documents to explain the nature and principle of these several appointments,

the relation of which comes to us only through the suspicious hands of Mr. Stuckley's enemies.

From Great Torrington, our author removed to Exeter, where he preached in the body of the cathedral, as Mr. Ford did in the choir ; but it appears from a book published by Mr. Tobie Allein, in 1658, entitled " Truth Manifest," that about the year 1650, Mr. Stuckley began to gather a church in Exeter, according to the congregational method. Soon after the restoration, he was obliged to quit the cathedral, and on Bartholomew-day, 1662, was silenced with the rest of his brethren. Had he chosen to conform, his opportunities for preferment were very considerable; for he was a kinsman of General Monk, whom every one knows to have had a preponderating influence at court. But Mr. Stuckley was a man of great integrity, and never sacrificed his conscience to his secular interest. His conduct in this particular is a sufficient refutation of all the calumnies retailed by the poor libellous author of the " Attempt."

After his ejectment, Mr. Stuckley did not remain idle, but continued preaching to his people in private, and was very laborious in his ministerial work. In the latter part of his life he went to reside at Biddeford, where he continued his delightful work of preaching, till disabled by a painful sickness, which issued in his death, in the month of July, 1687.

His "Gospel-glass, representing the miscarriages of English Professors," first published in 1667, he wrote under great bodily weakness. Besides this, he also published in 1658, a book entitled, "Manifest Truth," against Mr. Tobie Allein.

SUMMARY VIEW OF CONTENTS.

By a Friend to the Author and Reader.

PROFESSOR, in this necessary and seasonable Gospel-glass, there are many sad, but useful, sights for thee.

First, Wouldst thou know what may be seen ? I will tell thee ; herein the Miscarriages of Professors (and therefore of thine own self) are enumerated and aggravated. The sins enumerated are either against the Law and Gospel jointly, or against the Gospel and Law severally.

Professors' sins against the Law and Gospel jointly, are hinted in the first chapter, which shews their regardlessness of their own and others' souls.

Their sins against the gospel more particularly, are spoken to in the seven next chapters. The 2d. shews their want of saving conviction and compunction : the 3d. their want of despair in self : the 4th. their miscarriages about soul-troubles, the four following chapters, their miscarriages about believing in Christ : the 5th. their ignorance of Christ, temporizing with Christ, making base capitulations with him : the 6th. their delays to close with Christ : the 7th. their taking Christ partially, without conjugal affections, and without considering the cost they may be at : the 8th. their shuffling together false signs of closing with Christ.

Their sins against the law more peculiarly, are either against the first or second table. Their sins against the first table under the head of ungodliness) are discovered in the eleven following chapters. The 9th. shews their ignorance and errors: the 10th. their want of love to God: the 11th. their evil surmises of God: the 12th. their unthankfulness: the 13th. their neglect of prayer, especially of secret, both ejaculatory and closet prayer: the 14th. their miscarriages about their prayers: the 15th. their slighting the written Word of God, especially in not reading and meditating on it as they ought: the 16th. their miscarriages about the promises: the 17th. their abuse of providence: the 18th. their hypocrisy: the 19th. their sabbath-sins.

Their sins against the second table, are either personal or relative.

Their personal sins are evinced in the four next chapters. The 20th. shews their miscarriages about self-trial: the 21st. their pride: the 22d. their gluttony: the 23d. their idleness.

Their relative sins are spoken to in the fourteen following chapters. The 24th. shews their unmercifulness: the 25th. their unrighteousness, or unfaithfulness in trading: the 26th. their covetousness: the 27th. their envy: the 28th. their sins as superiors: the 29th. as husbands and wives: the 30th. as parents or children: the 31st. as masters or servants: the 32d. their miscarriages towards ministers, before their silencing: the 33d. since their silencing: the 34th. their miscarriages towards sinners.

The aggravations of their miscarriages, that are here enumerated, thou hast in the two next chapters. The 37th. shews their disingenuity and scandalousness: the 38th. their sinning against knowledge, and impenitently, notwith-

standing all means to bring them unto repentance.

Secondly, Wouldest thou know, and that experimentally, how useful such sights may be unto thy soul? Read diligently the two last chapters. The 39th. shews, what use thou shouldest make of this Glass ; and the 40th. What reason there is thou shouldest make such use thereof.

And now, Conscientious Reader, (so I stile thee, because I hope thou resolvest so to be) having given thee this brief account of what thou mayest expect in the following excellent treatise, I cannot but assure thee, that if thou bringest hither with thee a serious and teachable spirit, desirous to have thy soul searched to the quick, and the sores thereof lanced, and thoroughly cured, thou wilt not lose thy cost and pains : the closeness and pithiness of the compliment, will not only please ; but the materials, so full of spiritual vigour, and scriptural experience, will wonderfully advantage thy soul, and give thee cause, all the days of thy life, yea to eternity, to bless God for putting it into the heart of the reverend author (after he hath sacrificed his spirits and strength, in a public way of service to God, and his church, with more than ordinary activity and self-denial), under many bodily weaknesses, yea under a sentence of death, thus to employ his pen, when he cannot his tongue, for the good of thy soul. Every particular chapter, will, if God add his blessing. prove a complete soul-saving treatise. I shall add no more, to persuade thee to come and see, but this ;—that nothing but unwillingness to see what is here to be seen, and unpersuadableness to make such improvement of such sights, can make thy case desperate. Be sure only, *before,*

in, and after, thy serious perusal of these chapters, of so much worth, that thou beg earnestly of God, that he would be pleased, with some of his Son's eye-salve, to open thine eyes, that thou mayest see : and by his Spirit move so upon thy spirit, that thine eye may suitably affect thine heart, with what so much tends to the promoting of thine eternal welfare.

GOSPEL GLASS, &c.

THE SINS OF PROFESSORS.

CHAP. I.

Their Regardlessness of Souls.

1. **H**OW careless are we of our own souls!—1. Ohow few do believe they are men, having bodies that must die, but souls that will never die!—How few do believe that their bodies were given them to be serviceable to their souls! Their heads, their hearts, their eyes, their ears, their hands, their feet, &c. were all to attend upon their souls, and to help them to heaven; but this is not believed by many. As they are ignorant of the blessed God who made them, and of Jesus Christ, who came to redeem them, and *know not whether there be an Holy Ghost or no*: so they are ignorant of the preciousness of their souls. Christ hath not given them eyes to read and understand that a man is not, cannot be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul. Christ's questions, *What will it profit a man, &c.? What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* put it out of all question. Alas, many who carry the name of Christians, deserve

not the name of men. When you begin to value your souls you begin to be men. O that men would value that, which once they shall, they must value ! The damned spirits know now the worth of their souls ! How many will not !

2. How few consider the worth and preciousness of their souls ?—When do such thoughts as these possess you ?—“ Here in this earthly tabernacle, in this house of booths, dwells a thing, that I never saw, that is worth a world : though here I crawl up and down, like a worm of two or three cubits long, and am in danger of being thrown into an hole every day ; yet I carry with me a jewel, the loss whereof, the whole world cannot repair.” How seldom do *nominal* professors consider sadly and seriously, what will become of their souls, when *their excellency, which is in them, shall go* (or journey) *away*, as Eliphaz speaks ? Examine your thoughts all the day long, from morning to evening, and few are laid out for the soul.

3. Are not all the thoughts and cares laid out upon the body ; though the body be but clay, and the soul is a spirit, the body must die ; but the soul shall never die ?—How frequently do we think of our bodies, what their wants, burdens, necessities are ? but not so of our souls. How much of every day is spent in providing for thy body, but how little for thy soul ? The body should be but the soul's servant : yet men feed the slave, and starve the child. The body must be fed every day, clad every day, yea, adorned every day, and physicked if distempered ; but the soul needs food, raiment, physic continually, yet lieth unregarded : is left miserable, naked, starved, &c. A servant hath two talents to keep, the child, and the child's clothes : will the master thank the servant, if he plead, I have kept the clothes, but I have neglected the life of the child ? Thy body

is but thy soul's outward garment. How often have your ministers told you, that the soul was better than the body, and that your souls needed daily care more than your bodies? And yet you look after the one, with the neglect of the other. A day is coming, when thou wilt wish thou hadst been bred in the field among the beasts and worms, for that thou regardest thy soul no more than if thou hadst the life of a beast: thou wilt wish thou hadst been made a toad, a serpent, a worm, a dog, a swine, &c.; for then thou shouldest not have suffered to eternity, as now thou wilt, unless the eyes of thy understanding be opened to see, consider, and make provision for thy precious, but perishing soul. Thy body is perishing every day, and thy soul is upon the borders of eternity: it must live for ever; and yet all thy care is for the body, which likely will not live threescore years and ten; but the soul is neglected, that must live threescore millions of years in hell, without repentance; and then, when that date is over, thou art as far from the end of thy misery as thou wast the first day thou wast thrown among the damned.

4. How many will not speak with their souls; they are greater strangers to them than the Londoners are to their next neighbours. Didst thou ever ask thy soul such questions as these? "O my soul, how is it, how will it be with thee? O my soul, in what a state art thou? O my soul, what will become of thee? O what will become of thee in the next world?"

5. At what cost were we at any time for our jeopardded souls. The physician is consulted, if there be an ache upon the body: we will, with the woman, part with all, beggar ourselves, to recover health of body. When did you know a man starve himself, if he could have bread and water, whatever it cost? We will be at any expence of time, la-

bour and charges, to keep our bodies from starving ; but how are the ordinances of God, the word and sacraments (the spiritual food of the soul) neglected ? The flesh must be satisfied : as for the soul, there is little regard to its well-being. We cannot endure to see a cat, a dog, a beast want meat ; but how easily do many digest the want of that milk, whereby they should be maintained and grow ? *God, saith one, gives to these their requests, he gives them quails, but sends leanness into their souls.*

6. How fearless are many of soul-losses ?—How common is it for people to draw back from the service of Christ ? O ! what is the matter ? I shall lose my estate, liberty, pay such a fine, &c. They little consider what their souls will lose if they do not persevere, if they live not up to their light. Professors (pardon me that I miscal you), though you are blind and mad, and see not the worth of your souls ; yet know that your souls are the most considerable jewels you stand possessed of. *All the world will not weigh with one soul.* Thy money may ransom thy body ; nothing, save Christ's blood, thy soul. Pause awhile, reader, and reflect on all thy sinful neglects of thy immortal soul, lest on thy death-bed thou shriek and cry, *O my soul, whither art thou going ?*

II. How little are the souls of others valued and cared for ? —How many masters are there that care no more for their servants' souls than for the dogs ? nay, not so much ? Perhaps some of you are careful that the bodies of your families be clothed, be fed, &c. but the souls lie unprovided for : more care is taken for the pigs than for the souls.

1. How do we justly censure them as worthy of capital punishments, that murder the bodies of men ? but not so others, who poison and destroy thousands of souls.

How do you hate to have an hand in murdering the bodies of any ; to lay poison for the destruction of any ? and yet how commonly do men lay the poison of ill counsel, and ill example before others to cause them to fall into the pit of hell, and are not affected with this great evil ?

2. How troubled are we at any that kill bodies, or that murder others ; but not so at the millions that destroy their own and others' souls, that have an hand in ruining and damning themselves and others ?

3. If any neglect means that might have continued the life of their husbands, children, &c. how are they dejected ? How do they wring their hands and beat their breasts ? Whereas, if by carelessness, if by the neglect of their duties, if by evil example they have destroyed their souls, they are not troubled about these matters.

4. How do you account meanly of all that take pains for their souls ? that wait at the pool of Bethesda, that consult ministers and books, and attend on the ordinances for their souls, whilst you account it your wisdom to lay out the most, if not all, of your time for your bodies ? Hast thou the name of a Christian ? I pray God to let one word sink into thine heart ; *thou hast not Christ, thou hast not the Spirit of Christ in thee* ; he knows how to value souls, and therefore shed blood for them, and sends his Spirit in the Gospel to be importunate for their salvation.

CHAP. II.

The want of saving Conviction and Compunction in Professors.

HOW many Professors like Paul, are *alive without the Law* ? How many like Sardis, have *a name to live* ; imagine they are alive, *when they*

are dead ? How many are alive in their own conceit, and perhaps in the conceit of others, and yet are void of true supernatural life ? How many are contented with their being baptized ? They see no need of Christ, they were born of Christian parents, they are of the stock of Abraham : *We have Abraham to our father.* They do not consider how many baptized persons are deadly enemies to Christ, and to their souls : and averse to the ways of holiness ; they will not consider that swearers, drunkards, adulterers have as good claims to Christ and heaven as these have. How many also please themselves with the Religion of Education ? God hath not moulded their hearts, though parents their lives : their parents have taught them some principles of religion, but they are strangers to the wonderful operations and teachings of the Holy Ghost : they have not the *unction from above*, they know not what it is, *that teacheth all things* ; and yet such as these are alive, i. e. merry, jocund, jovial ; confident if any go to heaven, they shall be of the number. But to speak more particularly.

I. How many are there that were never convinced of original sin, imputed, or imparted ?—1. How few are convinced that Adam was a common person, and that we sinned in his loins, that if he had stood we had stood ; and that it is just with God, that, he shipwrecking himself, we should be counted sinners in him ? We did eat of the forbidden fruit in Adam, we in Adam believed the Devil rather than God ; we in Adam broke with God for toys and trifles ; we were ungrateful, disobedient in him ; we apostatized in him, and broke covenant with God in him ; hence *by one man's offence sin entered into the world, and death by sin*, for that (as Levi paid tithes in Abraham, so) we became rebels against the Majesty of Heaven in our first parents. When did

you shed a tear for Adam's sin, for your and his grand provocation?

2. How few see Adam's sinful nature imparted to them?—They see not *their inward part is very wickedness*, nothing but wickedness. Few see what a sad apostacy from the perfection of man's nature sin hath brought into the world, and how black an image of Satan it hath drawn upon the soul; they never saw what filthy, dirty, loathsome things they are in the eyes of God: they never saw their noisomeness and venom, the garbage and malignity of their hearts. How few see a general defect of all righteousness and holiness, wherein at first they were created? How few are convinced of an antipathy to all that is good? That they are haters of God by nature; that they are *dead in trespasses and sins*, a more dreadful state than if they were rotting in their graves; that they have an ocean of corruption within them, that will never be dried up in this life; that they have a worse leprosy than that amongst the Jews, which got into the walls, and would never out till the house was demolished; who (almost) thinks so sadly of themselves? They bless God their hearts are good, though they be the worst of men, pray not, slight ordinances, closet duties, and family worship lie neglected; yet the Devil persuades them all is well, their hearts are good: though the heart of man by nature be like hell itself, whose fire of lust is unquenchable; though it be like Peter's great sheet which he saw in the vision, *full of all unclean things*. Though it be a receptacle of all impiety, yet how few turn their eyes inward to see their natural deformities?

Alas! all the venom the snake sends forth, is nothing to the poison that lies in its nature: and all those monstrous impieties which the lives of

men are tainted with, are not to be compared with the venom that lurks in the heart of every man by nature. Men would not glory in their blood and descent, did they but believe how sin descended and was conveyed. Men could not content themselves to walk heavily under some actual misdemeanors, were they convinced of the body of sin within them, their greatest sorrows would be for their sinful propensities: neither would you wonder at any impieties and enormities in the earth, but would admire at the restraints of Heaven, that they are no greater. Alas! if the reader, were left to himself, he would presently lay hands on his nearest relations, and on himself. Certainly the reason why we turn not canibals, why every man is not a Sodomite, a murderer, an oppressor, &c. is, because God hath a rein on the heart, and curbs it for the continuation of mankind, that otherwise would soon be destroyed. The great boundary of the seas, and of the ocean of corruption, is the Sovereign above. But O! how do we commend nature! Such a man hath a good nature: such a man you may trust him, he will never commit such abominations. You may as well believe a toad will not poison, or the sea will not overflow the earth, if God leave it to itself. But to descend to particulars.

1. How few see the corruption of their mind? —How few are convinced, *that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be?* How few are sensible, that they are as foolish and mad as any Bedlams, in that they please themselves with that which should be their greatest burden, namely, sin? They are worse than the bee or ant, for these prepare for a severe hard winter: these provide for hereafter, whilst most

people mind present things, present pleasure, present profit, &c. with the neglect of heaven and future glory : they mind more what to eat and drink, what to have at present for this life, than what to lay up for eternity. They busy themselves to know what is of no consequence, but careless of momentous and eternal matters. How few employ their minds to know God, and how he is to be worshipped and pleased ; but employ themselves in needless and unprofitable speculations, in this, like fools and children, who prefer painted glass before jewels of value ; they more set by a little mirth and pleasure, than the matters of their salvation ? How are our minds enslaved to our affections : to the more brutish, inferior, and ignoble parts of the soul ; and we love to have it so ? Through this corruption of our minds how do we justify sin, excuse it, and plead for it ? Hence also, there are swarms of idle, confused, impertinent, foolish, ridiculous thoughts, that fill our souls and duties : seldom in the day, week, or year, any conceptions of God, suitable to his majesty and holiness. How unstable are our minds and judgments, so that we are as *reeds shaken with every wind* : now for duty, then soon wheeled off again ; now for repenting and humbling work, then tired and soon diverted ? And if we know the outside of truths, yet how often is that a bar to our closing with Christ, and walking in him ? And yet, though these poor, blind, deluded Bartimeuses fill all our ways and paths, so that wherever we go we meet with them : yet how seldom are any convinced of this, how seldom do any cry for *eye-salve that they may see* ?

2. And though not only the mind but the conscience is defiled ; though there be a

blindness upon it, whereby it mis-judgeth, and calleth darkness light, and although it be senseless as a stone, yet few do believe this corruption; hence they take sanctuary in their consciences, their consciences bear them witness; though it be bribed and corrupted; and they have a good conscience, though they know not what conscience is.

3. How few are convinced of the corruption of their will?—How do they wish that drunkenness, uncleanness, &c. were no sins? How do they choose to live a merry, rather than a holy life; to be the servants of the Devil rather than of God; to commit sin, and thereby hazard their damnation, rather than to suffer, and *through many tribulations to enter into the kingdom of God*? And how gladly would most professors enter and take up their rest in somewhat below God, if they could but enjoy the world according to their will?

4. Few are convinced of the pollution of their affections.—Though they hate what they should love, and love what they should hate; they love sin, which they should hate, and hate and slight God, to whom they should give the precedency of their love; though all be in disorder, all be misplaced; though God be dethroned, and sin, Satan, and the world be set up above all that is called God; yet few do really believe that such a miserable chaos is upon them.

5. How few are sensible of the corruption of their memories? Though they are especially charged to remember God, and how to get a possession of him; and to remember duty, and how to practise; and to remember sin, and how to shun it: yet how soon do they forget such truths, and lodge in their memories injuries, that they may avenge them: and vanities, foolish jests, unprofitable toys and tales, to please

themselves therewith ? You can remember how merry you were such a time, how vain, how your sensualities were abounding ; but you soon forget a sermon ; or, if you remember any thing delivered by the preacher, it is that which either concerns others' conditions, rather than your own, or which yields you the least advantages heavenward. We can remember the fall of Peter much easier than the repentance of Peter, than his bitter weepings : we can remember David's adultery, but not his repentance, and how it *broke his bones, and made his bed to swim.*

II. How few have been convinced that sin is the greatest evil ?—How few have seen it in its perfect odiousness, in its naked face, as that which makes men devils, fighting against God ? How are most strangers to its pedigree, and consider not the devil to be its father ? We would be thought to have nothing to do with the devil, nor that he hath any thing to do with us ; we can live in sin, and yet (hypocritically enough) defy the devil and all his works. We can make more moderate constructions of our sins, and call them the frailties of our flesh ; but *he that commits sin is of the devil*, i.e. the devil's drudge ; Satan works in him and by him. If men were convinced of this they would not *roll sin under the tongue as it were a sweet morsel* : yet how few see sin to be contrary to the works of God ? Although God had no sooner perfected the goodly fabric of heaven and earth, but sin gave a shrewd shake to all, it shook and disjointed all, and had it not been for Christ the great mediator, it had ruined the whole frame of nature. How few see sin to be contrary to the will of God ? God saith, I will have this done : I will not do it, saith sin : I will have this suffered, saith God : I will not suffer it, saith sin ; nay, so great is the contest betwixt

sin and God, that if it could, it would un-be God.

How few take notice of its contrariety to the very nature of God? God is good, sin is evil; God is pure, sin is impure. How few believe sin to be universally evil, that there is no good in it? We cannot persuade men that there is good in poverty, good in disgrace, good in reproaches with the tongue, and persecutions unto death; but easily are men persuaded that there is some good in sin. How few are convinced of the miserable effects and consequences of sin? The wrath of God is not revealed against their unrighteousness and ungodliness, so as to make their knees to tremble. The hand-writing on the wall is not observed. They are still alive. We cannot for our hearts persuade men to go up to heaven, to see what spoils it made there; could we herein prevail, then would they infer, that there is more evil in the least sin, than there is good in all the angels of heaven; for that one sin conquered them, and spoiled them of all their beauty, and made them of glorious creatures, to become such loathsome and hideous spectacles. Neither can we prevail with any (almost) to take a journey to paradise, to see its venom there; or to go to the garden, or to Mount Calvary, to see what work it did there; or to go to hell-gate, to hear the doleful shrieks and cries which it hath caused there. Though God hath said, *God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses*;—though there is *no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*;—though sin be the sole object of God's hatred (for God loved the whole creation, till its beauty was blasted and stained by sin);—though sin only separates between God and souls;—though in the belly of it be found all miseries, deaths and

hells ;—though it be the founder of all graves, and of Tophet ;—though it fill the conscience with terrors, and hell with fire and brimstone ;—yet few are affected with the evils of it, but they *drink in iniquity as water !*

III. How few professors are sensible that they are cast by an holy and righteous law ; that they are condemned creatures ? that the wrath of God abideth on them ?—Few have seen the black cloud full of woes, brimfull of wrath, ready to empty itself upon their souls : they take no notice, that though *the sentence be not executed speedily*, yet it is given forth, and there may be but a little breath, and they are gone to perish for ever. How many senseless souls are there in our parishes, whose consciences were never shaken, whose spirits were never wounded, who never *received the spirit of bondage to fear*, who never knew what a *fearful expectation of judgment* meant, who go dancing to hell in the devil's chains ; and yet count themselves the noble and gallant spirits, and flatter themselves in their own eyes, and say, *we shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our hearts ?* These are (Laodicean-like) *rich, and full, and needing nothing*, when God is about to *spue them out of his mouth*, as we discharge our stomachs of some loathsome surfeits. These are *wiser in their own conceit than seven men that can render a reason*. Though one minister after another endeavour with scripture upon scripture to convince them of, and to prick them to the heart for, their sin and danger ; yet they are boisterously confident and presumptuous, that they shall get to heaven as soon as any precise ones in the country. Never did man break one night's sleep upon their sinful and lost condition by nature ;—never did they loathe their ordinary food, or feel the smart of broken bones, as David.

did, though they have sinned at a greater rate ; —never did they know what a *wounded spirit* meant, what anguish of soul was ; —never did they feel God's wrath, or sin a burden insupportable ; —they were never *pricked at the heart*, so as to cry out, *What shall I do to be saved ?* What shall I do to have my sins pardoned ? Would you know the reason of all this security ? Alas ! they are *dead in sins and trespasses*. A dead condition is an insensible condition : death deprives of sense as well as life ; the dead are not frightened with the swords and pistols at their breasts ; the dead *fear* not, though threatened with fire and brimstone ; the dead *hear* not, though God be upon Mount Ebal thundering curses upon curses : the dead *see* not, though sin be so ugly a monster, and hell so frightful a place ; the dead *smell* not, though sin sinks worse than the vomit of dogs, than rotten sepulchres, or than the corrupted matter of the most loathsome disease : it offends not the dead to have this stinking carion always in their bosoms. The dead *feel* not, though that which is heavier than mountains of lead be lying on their backs ; they groan not, neither do they complain so much as Cain did ; they do not go *softly* in the bitterness of their souls by reason of their sins. Many cannot say with Hannah, that ever they were of a *sorrowful spirit*. Though there be so many curses upon the heads of all natural persons, though there be an entail of wrath upon the heads of the very sins they live in : though their sins, are or may be circumstantiated, to a greater degree than any of the Scripture-offenders that we read of, as being committed under the open sun of the Gospel ; —though hell be open to receive them every moment, whilst impenitent, whilst hardened ; —though the valley of Hinnom is making room for them, to entertain them with the ven-

geance of a justly provoked God ;—yet few fear, few *work out* their salvation with *weeping eyes*, and *trembling hearts* : they are still *alive without the law* ; they never *walked softly* with Ahab, or were under soul-trouble with Judas ; they fall short of the pangs and sense of hypocrites ; Alas ! I pity these secure souls : how short they will fall of their hopes, and how far short of heaven !

IV. How few are sensible that all this while the devil works in them, as in his workhouse ? That he possesseth the heart of every unregenerate man ? *The strong man keeps the house* ; and so all is quiet. It was a sad day when *the abomination of desolation* should be seen standing *in the holy place* ; but what are abominable men to abominable devils ? They did but exercise their cruelties on the bodies of the Jews, but how many devils have their walks in the hearts of natural men and women ? If thou art *in thy blood*, the devil hath entered into thee as sure as ever he entered into *the herd of swine*, and so hurrieth thee into base lusts, as he carried them headlong into the sea.

CHAP. III.

The want of saving Humiliation in Professors.

IF men are sensible of their sin and misery, yet *how many are going about to establish their own righteousness* ? Though some are convinced of the ugliness of sin ; of the misery by sin ; yet they are not fully convinced that the covenant of works requires personal, and constant obedience ; that it admits not of repentance, that it accepts not of the will for the deed ; but

*curseth every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them ; so that, if there be a failure by a vain thought, the conditions of that covenant are broken, and nothing, save fearful expectations, should seize on such a soul. Few, I say, believe this ; but though they are bankrupt children of Adam, yet they hope by their peddling wares to set up again, and maintain themselves, without being beholden to any other for procuring salvation : hence they pray who were prayerless before ; hear, and perhaps with much diligence, who were wont to play away the sabbath and sermon-time ; and reform in many things ; and now, *Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up in store for many years, yea, for eternity ; thou art converted sure, and so think all the neighbourhood : O ! what a change is here !* The man was a drunkard, not so now ; an adulterer, a profane Belial ; but now civilized, yea, a devout man ; serious, that was flashy before ; and *touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* Now he is alive indeed ; his conscience is pacified, which before troubled him ; he can hear the word gladly, which before was burthensome to him ; he can pray with affection, and with some delight, when before all the ordinances of heaven were tedious and intolerable burthens to him. Now he thinks, sure I have life within me, I am not dead. He sees not all this while, that he must have life from without, and ability from without : he doth not yet say, *mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up.* No no, he can look up with confidence, and call God Father ; and though sometimes he provokes God, yet he is secure.*

He doth not see that he is dead, i. e. damned, and insufficient of himself *to think any thing as of himself; but all his sufficiency is of God.* He thinks he is not utterly unable to make amends for his sins, nor quite dead, for he can pray, &c. He sees not that it is as easy to make new worlds, as to put up one acceptable prayer to God. He sees not that he needs an almighty power to enable him to perform his duties, and infinite satisfaction to discharge him of his debts. He is somewhat sensible of his danger by sin, but he eyes not him that is *mighty to save.* He looks for help within, but not without. He sees no absolute necessity for Christ all this while. He sees not that *all his righteousnesses are as filthy rags* in God's sight, and that all his duties fill up the catalogue of his sins. He sees not that *there is no salvation in any other, save Jesus Christ; because there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* He hopes to go to heaven through doors of his own: the door of repentance, the door of reformation, the door of good works, &c. Hence he takes hold of the mercy of God, and the promises of pardon, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, yea, he will abundantly pardon.* "Thus have I done, (saith this awakened person) and now my case is good. O! I would not be in my old mires for a world! O what a change is here! I was a careless wretch, careless of God, and my soul, careless of praying, reading, hearing, &c. not so now." And now that *the house out of which the unclean spirit is gone, is swept and garnished,* he carrieth it high, and little thinks he, that *seven worse spirits* are entering in. This is the case of multitudes of professors, whom Christ will never

see nor save, for that they are not *lost*, they are not succourless and helpless, they think they may save themselves from the wrath to come. They see not that there is a satisfaction to be made to Divine Justice, which they cannot make ; wherefore their hopes are from their reformati^ons, not from Christ ; their peace is from their performances, not from Christ's blood of atonement ; *All these have I kept from my youth up.*

Hence he is confident, not from Christ's *coming under the law* : hence he is diligent in prayer, &c. but careless of the way of Faith ; hence he blesseth himself in his own performance, and is no way taken up with what Christ hath done and suffered for him. Moses is magnified and Christ is slighted : Duties are set up and Faith neglected : Works advanced and cried up, and Faith is little heeded or looked after. How few are there who count themselves wholly destitute of every good thing, that should make them acceptable unto God ? They lay not the weight of salvation upon the grace of God by Jesus Christ, but upon somewhat that comes from themselves : they will have a bridge of duties, that shall carry them over the gulf of eternal misery : they hope to quench hell-fire by their tears. Alas ! some years ago you might as well have drawn water out of the flint, as tears from them ; but the case is altered : " I was blind, but now I see the deserts of sin, which I saw not before ; I see it is a fearful thing to sin against God, and now I bewail my sins, and am sorry at heart for them ; sure my condition is mended, I thank God I am not as other men, nor as once I was myself, I hope by my tears to wash away my sins." All the while Christ lieth without doors, the soul is a stranger to faith in Christ, he sees not his insufficiencies, he sees not his unworthiness to go to

heaven and glory ; he sees not his inability to think a good thought ; he hopes without Christ he can do something. If he did judge his condition hopeless ; he would tremble, and have no rest in himself till God hath delivered him ; he would see an absolute necessity of obtaining Christ and his righteousness, and he would be put off with nothing else. But O ! how hard a work do ministers find it, first to take off men from their sins, and then from confidence in their duties ? We tell men, Christ will have no sharer in the glory of saving lost man ; but people will at least have their works and Christ to divide the spoils, to share in the glory of bringing back lost souls to God. We advise men to lay no weight on their duties, but to lean alone on Christ's merits ; but in vain. Christ saith, *If ye seek me, let these go their way*, these duties as well as these sins ; but the deaf ear is turned, and we find it much easier ^{to} persuade men their sins will damn them than their duties, whilst Christ is thereby neglected.

CHAP. IV.

The Miscarriage of Professors about their Soul-troubles.

IF the Spirit of the Lord have convinced men of their danger by their sins, and their own righteousness ; that they shall see God angry with them, and if their souls remain under trouble and disquiet ; yet, are they not guilty of some, if not all of the following miscarriages ?

1. How few are there that justify God ?
—Few accept of the punishment of their

iniquities, they do not clear God, as they should, from all unrighteousness. Commonly proud hearts swell and fume against these methods of God. Though the filthiness of their hearts be laid open before them, yet they fall not down upon their faces in the acknowledgment of their unworthiness of mercy : few charge themselves and acquit God. They cannot be brought to give God the glory of his righteousness, if he should condemn them to the pit of hell ; they do not willingly and uprightly own the desert of damnation, and charge themselves with it as their due portion, and most just inheritance. Few *give their cheeks to him that smiteth*, as the Church did ; they do not say, *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him*, or with Ezra, *thou hast punished us less than our iniquities have deserved*, or with Daniel, *O Lord ! Righteousness belongeth unto thee ; but unto us confusion of face*. How seldom do you hear professors with this confession in their mouths, “ Lord, I am thy creature, and thou mayest do with thy creature what pleaseth thee ; it pleased thee to put thine image on me, to *create me upright*, but I have *sought out many inventions*, I have sold myself for nought, I have preferred the devil’s work before thine, and therefore thou mayest abhor me, and give me my portion among the damned crew, and if I feel some sparks of hell-fire, in thy wrathful present frowns, it is of thy rich patience and mercy, that they are but sparks ; if thou cast me off for ever, it is but what I have deserved long ago ; it is of the Lord’s mercy I was not hurled from the womb or cradle to hell, because of my native sinfulness, but woe is me, I have provoked the pure eyes of thy glorious Majesty days without number, I have been a rebel of

long standing against thee, my will hath been justling and quarrelling with thine these many years, and therefore if I be sent to hell, *thou art* righteous and *clear when thou judgest*. I can blame none save myself if I perish everlastingly, though I have many fears and sorrows on me; yet blessed be God, they are not the sorrows of hell, thanks be unto the Lord, that I am not yet among the damned ones, roaring in the pit of hell. Few believe they deserve damnation; hence souls are murmuring at any affliction, at the loss of an husband, child, estate, &c. as if God had dealt hardly with them, in depriving them thus.

2. How few professors when under soul-troubles are willingly under them?—They see not the advantage of having their *way hedged up with these thorns*. They do not *receive the spirit of bondage*. They do not accept this punishment; they take it not kindly at God's hands. Their troubles are involuntary, few kindly works that I meet with among awakened and startled professors; they are held in the chains against their will. How many are afraid of sorrow for sin? Some think it will spoil good faces, and their beauty may be lost through their troubles; but others think it will bring them to despair, and therefore farewell to such a preacher; he is too terrible for their souls. Hence the soul must have his harp to divert him; the cards must be taken up again;—some merry books, some romances must be read;—perhaps a play may be seen;—jovial frothy company must be called in; and all this to divert the soul from minding its danger, lest it be swallowed up of grief, or some unskilful and unfaithful empyrics shall be sent for, to sew pillows under him that he may sleep the quieter. Few, David-like, when their *cogitations much trouble* them, so that their *countenances are*

changed in them, keep notwithstanding their matter in their hearts. How few are active in their soul-troubles? Retire, and go alone that they may search the Scriptures, and ransack their hearts in order to contrition and humiliation of their hearts? How few are gladdened by any portion of God's word, that brings their sinfulness and self-fulness to remembrance, and causeth any meltings of heart and humblings of soul under it? How do some professors quarrel with their ministers, and snarl at the books that give them trouble of spirit?

3. How few mourn for sin upon spiritual accounts? That their God is dishonoured, their good and gracious God who hath done so much for them, &c. doth not chiefly cut their hearts; *against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*; but perhaps they are troubled for wronging themselves, endangering themselves, &c. They cry as dogs; when they have done a fault, they fear the whip and so they howl.

4. How many professors mourn for their sins, yet live in the continual practice of them?—Notwithstanding their fears; yet their hearts are in league with their lusts: Thus, like the scolds at Billingsgate, they are soon out and soon in again with their lusts; but few, whilst mourning for their sins, are solicitous and careful which way God may have satisfaction for the injuries that have been done unto him: The mourning of many professors lasts no longer than the trouble of conscience: as soon as the guilt of sin is removed, as they hope, their mourning ceaseth, though the strength of sin be as great as ever.

5. Among the multitudes professing religion, how many seek for grace, in order to their comfort? Joy, peace, comfort, being their great end, but how few seek for comfort in order to grace?

6. How few mourn for the slightings of Christ?

—It is more natural and so more easy to mourn for sins against the law, than those against Christ and his Gospel; therefore if there be many tears shed for neglect of prayer, theft, perjury, &c. yet how few are found mourning for undervaluing and rejecting Christ and his tenders? Whose soul cries out, “O! how unkind have I been to Christ? O! that he should come out of his Father’s bosom for me, come under the law, yea die for me; and yet I should keep him out of doors: that the Son of God, that *the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of his person, the upholder of all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,* should stoop so low as to *stand at the door and knock,* and yet that I should not let him in! Break, heart! break into small dust; be trembling all over for thy unkindnesses to so great, so rich, so good a friend! O wretch that I have been! What more kindness to my dog, my cat, &c.? If my dog be whining at the door, he hath admittance, and yet thou shut out; O, *I abhor myself in dust before thee! I meet with few of these mourners.*

CHAP. V.

*Professors ignorant of Christ : their temporizing :
their making base Capitulations with Christ.*

HOW many are ignorant of Christ, and of what use he is to perishing souls?—They know no more *the gift of God*, than the Samaritan woman did; they know not what an excellent gift Christ is, that he is *the fountain of living water*, and therefore ask nothing of him. It is one thing to hear of a Christ, and another thing to know Christ. How few know Christ to be their only life? If you did believe, that *he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life*; and that *whoso findeth me (Christ) findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord*: but *he that sinneth against me (Christ) wrongeth his own soul*; *all they that hate me (Christ) love death*. Upon such a conviction, what would you not give for life? Esau will part with his birthright to preserve his life. The woman will part with her whole estate to recover health, and to secure herself from the grave. Of all blessings we value life mostly, but few have such esteems of Christ. Few can say as Paul, *What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ*: yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ; and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by

aith. I determined not to know any thing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Or with David, Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee. Few look on Christ as the original of their life, that they must live, move, and have their being in Christ, and from Christ alone; that they are dead without him; and hence their desires are not after him. If you knew that you want Christ more than bread and water, then would you cry out, Lord, give me Christ! None but Christ, none but Christ; in him is my help, in him is my salvation. He is the author of all our good affections, and of all our gracious abilities; but alas! blind man sees him not in his usefulness. What is thy beloved more than another beloved? He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men. Men must die and be damned, without a Christ; but they know it not, they know no good that Christ is, and no good that Christ brings.

II. How many serve their turns of Christ, close with Christ for their own ends? When men have served their turns one of another, away they go: so these troubles they have; and ease they would have; they have stayed off from Christ as long as they could; they have tried worldly comforts, they will not do; they have tried duties, they will give no rest; and therefore in the terror of their spirits, they must have Christ, so much of him as may give them quiet and rest. Men are weary of the bands and fetters wherein they are held under the law; they would fain be delivered from Satan that torments them, and from the sins that now stare them in the face:

they groan under the weight of the wrath of God, but not under the body of sin ; Satan as a tormenter is unwelcome, but as a tempter is still liked well enough. "O ! I am afraid I shall go to Hell. O ! if there be no other way to escape, but through Christ, O ! then for a Christ ; then sermons and ministers are welcome, in hopes of bringing in (not so much a Christ as) peace, and comfort to the troubled spirit." So that men use Christ as sick men take meat, not for love of it, or liking to it, for their stomachs rise against it, but for fear of death, which makes them force themselves to eat.

Though many come to Christ, it is by constraint, not willingly, not with delight, not as an healthy man comes to a full table, to feed with pleasure. Many to avoid a greater mischief, to avoid damnation, to avoid eternal torments, will go to Christ in their sore extremities : they will then make large concessions, take up great resolutions against their sins, pray to God, and with vehemency and constancy, so as they never prayed before ; but upon case to the imposthumed matter, upon recoveries out of their troubles, they become if not profane, yet worldly and negligent of Christ, his person, his laws, his concernments. They have of Christ what they came for : They come to Christ, as some come to shops, not to have all in the shop, but what they immediately want ; they want comfort, and therefore they venture as the lepers to the camp of the Syrians, they had no love to them, they counted them their enemies ; but *if we stay here we perish*, or as ladies use litters to carry them over the dirt ; or as we use a pent-house during the storm, and then farewell ; or as passengers the boat, they cry vehemently a boat ! a boat ! and as soon as they are ferried over the deep, farewell to the boat, they think no more of it.

*When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. Then, never before, and never after. Undoubtedly multitudes have been affrighted to Christ, who were never truly and thoroughly converted to him, and have left their sins from compulsion of their judgment, not from the propension of their will: not from any love they have born to Christ: they love to be safe, but still hate to be holy. O! O! how many are herein deluded, who have pretended a great deal of love to Christ, whilst base self, the love of pleasure and ease, and to be exempted from horrors and fears, hath been the bias that hath drawn them to Christ! I appeal to thy conscience, whether Christ be valued, be looked after, save in a strait? When trouble is upon thee, then the physician is sent for; but when the pang is over, the physician's company is too chargeable, is no way desirable; the sooner he turns his back the better. When women are great with child, and when men and women both hear it thunder, and see it lighten, when the arrows of the Lord fly thick, and a great mortality is sweeping many to the grave, O! then, how shall I get Christ? then books are read, sermons heard and valued, prayers not neglected; but when the fears of death are over, O! then *who will shew us any good?* Then redeem lost time, not for God and souls, but for the world; then head and ears in the world again, then secret prayer is neglected; then the bible lies in a dusty corner, not viewed till the next storm arise; and then Christ must be awakened with *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* I will tell you what your ministers have told you before, Sin and the world were your companions in the days of health, ease, and peace; and Christ your desire in cloudy days. Is is not so?*

If Christ in the day as well as in the night, lies *chief between thy breasts*, thou hast cause to say *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.* But I fear most pitch on Christ for themselves, and not for Christ. Christ in the time of contagion shall go for something, but Christ in the days of health and ease shall be valued no more than a mere chimera, a cipher, a nothing. It is one thing to take Christ to pacify the conscience, and another to take him to purify the heart. An unquiet conscience is to most a greater burden than an insensible, seared, and polluted conscience, than an impure heart. O repent of thy jugglings with Christ. *They did flatter him with their mouths, and they lied unto him with their tongues.* They pretend to come to Christ in order to service and obedience, when all the while they serve themselves on Christ.

III. How many have base capitulations with Christ; Many come running to Christ and ask him, as the man in the Gospel, *Good master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* Christ tells him and them *Go thy way, sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, take up the cross, and follow me.* But as he, so they are discontented. *And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved for he had great possessions.* Undoubtedly many hypocrites have some glimpse of Christ's glory, and they run to Christ, whilst others deride him; they like not the price that Christ sets; they would have Christ on their own terms. Christ's terms are to have the heart; *My son, give me thy heart*; do not lend it only, but give; give it cheerfully, give it presently, give me it now: now, that it is called to-day, *To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the*

provocation. Give me thy heart, to be framed and fashioned by me, to be stamped and sealed by me ; be no longer thine own : I will not be content that thou lend me thy heart for a sabbath, or for a day of prayer, and then thou call for thine heart again, and bestow it upon thy lusts ; give me thine heart, and do not sell it for base ends, for base respects : give me thine heart, do not keep it to thyself ; lay up and leave thine heart in my hand, for me to keep it for thee. But alas ! how shamefully do we break with Christ ? We would live as we list, and do as we list. We are content to give Christ the body, the outward man, the ear, the tongue, the head, &c. but we reserve our hearts for the service of the world and of sin ; or if we are persuaded to give the heart ; yet it is but a divided heart, not the whole heart, but a piece of it. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart*, saith Christ ; but pride, covetousness, and voluptuousness would fain have a share ; hence no full closings between Christ and many professors ; Christ and they part. They, as some customers, seem to commend the wares, but they like their money better. Few see themselves so miserable without a Christ, as to come up to the price. Their cursed leagues with base lusts bind them so fast in chains, that they cannot, they will not come up to Christ's proposals, to Christ's demands ; they will treat with Christ on no other terms, unless they may have the pleasures of sin, and may fulfil the lusts of the flesh ; but if conscience be disquieted and troublesome, then they make new offers ; they will leave many sins, they will except but one ; there is but one exception they have, and if that may be accepted, then they are Christ's ; they have but one reserve. These swine are contented to escape the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord

and Saviour Jesus Christ, so they may have one mire to return to, and wallow in. If Christ will stoop to these terms, then welcome Christ; if one sin and Christ may share the heart betwixt them the man is contented; but few are contented that every knee should bow, that every sin be parted from. *The Lord be merciful to me if I bow in the house of Rimmon.* No, saith Christ, all or none. If the conscience be not quiet upon this; then, as mariners throw overboard their goods, their jewels, their bales of silk, and other pleasant wares in a tempest, to ease the vessel, which they wish for in a calm, and labour to fetch up again, if it be possible, when the storm is over; so many professors will part from all the practice of sin, throw all overboard, as the mariners did Jonah, though much against their will, in hopes of riding out the storm, and then wish for their lusts again, yea, *with the dog, return unto the vomit, and with the sow to wallow in the mire.* Doubtless many, like him, who had a mind to his kinsman's land, and would have paid the purchase money, but liked not the terms of marrying Ruth. They would have Christ by the purchase of their duties: they hope by the stock of prayers, tears, and obedience to purchase Christ, but will not march with Christ, and have the inheritance by that way of conveyance. That man liked Ruth's means but not Ruth's person, and many like somewhat of Christ, but not his person, not all of Christ; they like Christ's pleasant summers, but not his pinching winters; love and like his heaven, but not his severe commandments; they like his sacrifice, but not his service. Many peddling customers Christ hath, but few, very few, who will come roundly up to Christ's offers, and take all off his hands. They would take off his mercy, his peace, his righteousness; but not his Spirit,

his grace, his holiness, &c. What saith Christ ?

“ If you will have my comforts, you must have me too ; if my pardons, my person too ; you must take me as well as mine ; you must have me as well as my heaven.” This makes many go

away sorrowful again, “ If you will have me,

saith Christ, you must be at some cost, at some

pains and trouble to enjoy me ; nothing of me

or mine is got without difficulty and industry ;

your cold prayers must not suffice, your lazy

hearings are not enough ; you must watch your

hearts all the day long, you must *make a cove-*

nant with your eyes, and keep your lips as with

a bridle. Are ye so contented ?” “ Oh ! no,

saith the slothful professor, I would go to heaven

on a feather-bed, I would be contented to pray

now and then, morning and evening, so I may

be at my own disposal all the following hours.”

“ *Hearken, O daughter, and consider and incline*

thine ear ; forget also thine own people and thy

father’s house. So shall the king greatly desire thy

beauty ; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.

“ Three *alls* I expect you part with, saith Christ.

1. All your sinful lusts, all the ways of the

old Adam ; our father’s house. Ever since Adam’s

apostacy, God and man have parted houses.

Ever since, our father’s house is an house of ill

manners, an house of sin and wickedness. *Let*

the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous

man his thoughts : and let him return unto the

Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to

our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 2. All

your worldly advantages. *By faith, Moses when*

he was come to years, refused to be called the son

of Pharaoh’s daughter, chusing rather to suffer

affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy

the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the

reproach of Christ greater riches than the trea-

sures in Egypt ; for he had respect unto the re-

compence of the reward. If any man come unto me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. He that hath all these must be ready to part with all; they are joined not disjunctively but copulatively. 3. All self, self-will, self-righteousness, self-sufficiencies, self-confidences; and self-seekings. But Oh! how do many pretenders to Christ hate these proposals? I can tell you what many of your terms are, I will have a Christ if I may live as I list, and love as I list; I'll indent with Christ to make much of him when my conscience gnaws and troubles me, so I may but dismiss him when I have sung lullaby to conscience."

CHAP. VI.

The delays of Professors in closing with Christ.

IV. **H**OW many do delay in their coming to Christ! And O! what indignities are herein put upon Christ! How long doth he stand at the doors of sinners ere they let him in. *My head, saith Christ, is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.* Though he limit sinners to a day, *To-day if ye will hear his voice, &c.* Though our life be even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away, ready every moment to expire;—though we must needs perish and be damned, if we believe not in him before we die; *He that believeth not shall be damned*:—though now is the accepted time;—though the Spirit may never invite more: *My Spirit shall not always strive with man*;—though we are not sure of one day of grace more;—yet

how do many hazard their eternity rather than they will yet be beholden to Christ for life and salvation? Though they may have his righteousness, his redemption, his spirit, his image, his heaven, his glory, his love, his honour, his inheritance by coming to him, yet what trifling delays are men's hearts filled with! Though they are actually condemned by the law for their capital offences, for high treason against the majesty of heaven, and pardons be offered freely by Jesus Christ unto them, if they will but accept of him and them, yet so is Christ fallen in the account of them, who yet are nominal Christians, that they will hazard their souls, rather than they will yet be so much beholden to Christ. This desperate enmity against Christ and his offers is the condemning sin. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.* All other sins were nothing to this! What! when God hath limited thee to a day, wilt thou, darest thou carelessly mispend that one day, when thou art not sure of another? Believe it, your trifling delays are more hideous sins, do more stain your souls and provoke God, than drunkenness and natural lusts in such as never had one of your calls. How darest thou, having so many ways transgressed against this God, having provoked him to wrath by so frequent breaches of his holy law, to add to all these iniquities thy trifling delays of coming unto Christ that thou mayest be pardoned? How darest thou, when lying under the wrath of a justly incensed God, send away Christ, as Felix did Paul, with *Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee*: when, wretch, is that convenient season? Is it then, when thou hast served the devil some weeks,

months or years longer? when thou hast spent all the flower of thy time and strength in the service of hell? Must then Christ have the dregs of thy time? Must he have nothing but Satan's leavings? O! doubtless, for these delays is Christ's wrath ready to be poured out upon this nation to the uttermost. *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!* By delaying to hearken to Christ's calls and invitations thou tellest Christ to his face, that he is not altogether lovely, that he is not the fairest of ten thousand, that there is somewhat in sin's service and the Devil's that is more desirable than can be had in Christ's. And canst thou imagine such blasphemy, (viz. To tell Christ to his face that thou valuedst thy lusts above the enjoyment of him,) is not provoking? O! if these come over fully to Christ, if Christ's patience be extended yet longer, and they be at length won to him, how will they befool themselves that they came into Christ's service no sooner? *Nimis sero temari.* "O! I have loved thee too late. Oh the joy, the unspeakable joy I have lost! Oh! the peace that I might have had! Oh the assurance of God's love that my soul might have been filled with! Oh the experiences of the grace of God, that I might have had, if I had come in to Christ on Christ's first call and entreaty! Oh the opportunities of service that I might have had, when the marrow was in my bones, when I was young and fresh for duty! Oh! how good it had been if I had borne Christ's yoke (sooner) in my youth? O the many sins that I have been guilty of! Oh! how long withstood I the grace of God, and grieved the Spirit of God! Oh! what a burden was I to Christ's ministers, and much more to Christ himself?"—But God alone knows, how soon his Spirit shall

cease striving with these poor souls, and how long they shall be within a capacity of obeying the heavenly call. The Jews have a rule, that if a man vows any service to God before he dies, he must do it presently, because he may die presently. Death and Hell are described coming on horseback in full speed. Ask thyself therefore Jeremiah's question, *Can I outrun or escape these horsemen?* However, through the great and wonderful averseness there is in men's hearts from Christ, they stay and linger like Lot in Sodom, that if God do not work a miracle upon them and for them, they will perish in the flames. They know what the foolish virgins lost by their delays; all is one, no coming to Christ, as long as possibly they can make any shift to live without him, and until an Almighty power exert itself on their souls, to make them willing of a Christ. One hath a wife, another a yoke of oxen, all of them some business or other to detain them for the present from Christ. They do not utterly deny to come, but at present they have such employments, as that they have no present freedom to wait upon him. The Son of God must dance attendance on them, they must be banqueting with the devil within, and Christ must stand without, yea, wait their leisure, till they receive him in. There are several sorts of these delaying professors.

1. Some (and they the worst sort) from their great love to their lusts, and to the comforts and sensualities of this life, which they fear, when they are under Christ's yoke they shall be bereaved of, delay coming to Christ. Sin hath so rooted itself in their hearts and affections, that they are loath to take a final farewell thereof, loath to mortify their earthly members. sin is so prevalent with them, that they had rather part from their right eye, hand, and foot, than part from

their sins ; hence they choke their convictions what they can, admit of any pleasures and diversions, to wear out the impressions made on their consciences, that they may still lodge sin in their bosoms, and not come to Christ ; hence they labour to quench the Spirit of God, and through the prevails of spiritual sloth, will not use the means, whereby they may be fully converted to Christ. They pretend they are fully desirous of Christ, only they doubt whether Christ is willing to receive them ; but that which lieth at the bottom is this, they are loath to leave their darling lusts, and loath to pray and search their hearts, and to do what God desires and expects at their hands, in order to conversion. You may imagine God is highly provoked hereby : for God to send his Son unto you, the best jewel that ever lay in his bosom, and for you to neglect and undervalue him, and prefer swinish lusts before him,—this is a plain argument that you never saw sin aright in its nature and effects, and that you do not credit God in his discoveries of the glory of his Son.

You do not believe you are so miserable without a Christ as indeed you are ; you slight the greatest gift that ever God conferred upon the children of men ; you make void the great counsels of God, all the thoughts of his wisdom and grace in contriving such a way, as by Jesus Christ to save you from wrath to come ; you also frustrate the expectations of God, for *surely* (saith God) *they will reverence my Son* ; whereas, by your trifling delays, you tell God and men, that you believe not any advantage you shall have by the Son of God ! you think it will be to your loss to receive in the Lord of glory. He tells you, *Ye shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house, and ye shall drink of the rivers of his pleasures.* He tells you, *he hath*

gathered his myrrh with his spices; he hath wine, milk, and honey. You cry out, I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on, &c. A little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep. You are told of joys unspeakable and full of glory; of peace that passeth all understanding; of eternal life by knowing Christ. You are told, you can never be reconciled unto God, but by Christ; that he must end all controversies between Christ, and your souls; that he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him; that his word is more desirable than gold; yea, than much fine gold. But all this prevails not with you. When I have a convenient season, &c. Yet I cannot, I pray have me excused. He tells you, If ye believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins; and that he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him, yet delays still. He tells you, Blessed is the man that heareth me, and whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. I am the word of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. He tells you, of strangers and enemies you shall become children, and yet this seems a light matter, to be so near related to the King of kings. Is not this England's great provocation, to refuse so great an honour and dignity? He assures you, there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ. And shall he not condemn wretches, that slight the pardons that are offered to them? These must expect a double wrath. Of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy, &c.

2. Others, in imitation of the old Adam, believe the Devil before God, credit his suggestions

beyond all God's discoveries. O! what a black grained sin is this? Saith the Devil, You have sinned against light, and therefore Christ will not favour you: Saith God, *Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and I will abundantly pardon.* Saith the Devil, You have sinned more than others, you have provoked God exceedingly, and therefore never hope for saving benefit by Christ's death: Saith God, *Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come now and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow.* Saith the Devil, You have sinned not only against the law, but against the gospel, you have neglected Christ: Saith God, *Every sin against the Son of man shall be forgiven.* Saith the Devil, You have no right to Christ, it is in vain to come: Saith God, *Whosoever believeth shall not perish.* Saith the Devil, Your day of grace is past: Saith God, *To-day, whilst it is called to-day, hear his voice.* Saith the Devil, God never intended you good, you are a vessel of dishonour: Saith God, *As I live I desire not the death of a sinner, but that he turn and live.* Now I pray consider, whether God takes it kindly at your hands, that you should lay more weight on the father of lies than on *the faithful God, who hath promised and cannot lie*; who must cease to be God in that very moment wherein he ceaseth to be true. You perhaps deceive yourselves with the Pharisees' comforts. *You are not as these harlots, as these publicans, no drunkards, &c.* but little think that you put the lie upon God. You believe the enemy more than the friend. O! what a provocation is this!

3. Others through the pride of their hearts, will not come as yet unto Christ. They have no mind to *submit to the righteousness of faith.* He is judged a proud man (without a jury sitting on him) who when condemned will not submit, will

not stoop so low as to accept of a pardon. I must indeed correct myself, men are willing to be justified ; but they would have their duties to purchase their peace and the favour of God : they scorn to be beholden to Christ. Thousands will die and be damned rather than they will have a pardon upon the sole account of Christ's merits and obedience. O the cursed pride of the heart ! When will men cease to be wiser than God ? To limit God ? When will men be contented with God's way and method of saving them by the blood of the everlasting covenant ? How dare men thus to prescribe to the infinitely wise God ? Is it not enough for thee that thy destruction is of thyself ? But must thy salvation be of thyself too ? Is it not enough that thou hast wounded thyself ? But wilt die for ever, rather than be beholden to a plaister of free grace ? Wilt be damned unless thou mayest be thine own saviour ? God is willing (*so God loved the world that he gave his Son*) : Art thou so proud as that thou wilt not be beholden to God ? Thou wilt deserve, or have nothing. What shall I say ? Poor thou art, and yet proud, thou hast nothing but wretchedness and misery, and yet thou art talking of a purchase. This is a provocation. *God resisteth the proud*, especially the spiritually proud. He that is proud of his clothes and parentage, is not so contemptible in God's eyes, as he that is proud of his abilities, and so scorns to submit to God's methods for his salvation by Christ, and his righteousness alone.

4. Others, through their ignorance and weakness stay off from Christ, in hopes of working that which cannot be wrought without a Christ. Were their hearts so humbled and melted, as such and such are, could they see all their sins subdued, were their hearts more fitted and prepared for to lodge so great a friend, they

would then close with the promises, with Christ; whereas they should come to Christ; as soon as they apprehend they are poor, blind, and naked; for them he calls and invites. But alas! a sight of their wants is a bar to their coming. They would have the fruits first, and then the tree; have their hearts purified, and then come to Christ (*who is appointed by God to be sanctification to them*). God comes by his Spirit to convince them of their sinful nature and weakness, on purpose that they, seeing their necessity of Christ, might fly to him, as their city of refuge, and they are driven farther off by the sight of their sins and unworthiness. Whereas they should come to Christ as to a magazine and storehouse, and wait on him, in the use of means, for the broken heart, the pure heart, and all other spiritual mercies, which their souls are yet destitute of, but they will not. *O faithless generation! How long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?* Christ is put to the utmost of his patience to bear out with unbelief.

5. Others through some kind of seeming modesty and tenderness, delay in their coming to Christ. They are afraid of abusing the holiness and justice of God, if they should hope for any privilege in the blood of Christ, and mercies of God. "What mercy! mercy for me? me a proud wretch, an unclean wretch, an enemy to God, a slihter of his Spirit! I deserve nothing but hell. What! heaven for me? I have affronted the majesty of the great God. And what!—This God bestow a Christ on me? Who can believe, that the just God, who turned down the glorious angels to hell for one transgression, will save me, who have committed more sins in number than the hairs on my head, than the sands on the sea shore? And what mercy for me? Shall I have a Christ? Will Christ accept of me, who

have wronged his Father and him for so many years together? O! how long doth many an awakened soul hang in doubts and fears, ere it will venture upon Christ's graciousness alone; and then when the soul hath long stood out, the fears increase. "I have refused Christ so long; to all my former transgressions I have added this, my putting off Christ and salvation when freely tendered, and therefore sure I may not now come." And now if Christ offers them mercy, still they are fearful, they cannot believe that Christ is serious and real. O! by these jealousies of Christ you provoke him not a little. You are ready to say, this is too good news to be true: What is this but to say, the gospel is false, it is no true and faithful word, it is not to be received with all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the greatest of sinners, blasphemers and persecutors of Christ? This is the great sin that made Christ weep. You seldom find Christ weeping over the idolators of the world: I find him not weeping over Sodom and Gomorrah; but if Jerusalem refuse Christ, this makes him weep indeed, *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, O if thou hadst known even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that concern thy peace!* Christ became a man of sorrows, was acquainted with griefs, &c. in hopes he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. It troubles Christ to see thee to go about to make God a liar in his Son, and to be denied thy loves and affections, for whose sake he submitted to his Father's frowns. O! this sin of unbelief hath great unkindness in it, and therefore no wonder if Christ upbraids for it. A man is properly upbraided, when as the kindness that hath been done to him, is revealed to him, together with his ungratefulness.

But what shall I say ? So far are souls from coming to Christ, that they do seldom bewail this sin, and seldom seek to God for power against it, and though men pretend they cannot come to Christ, yet the truth is, they will not (so Mr. Fenner, in his “Wilful Impenitency” hath abundantly proved). The immediate cause of your not coming is not a natural deficiency, but a moral opposition of spirit against Christ.

CHAP. VII.

Professors receive Christ partially;—without conjugal affections;—and without considering the cost they may be at.

V. **I**F at length men are persuaded to come to Christ, yet they take him partially, both as a king, prophet, and priest.—*As their king.* They are contented he shall rule in many things, but not in all. Their drudgery to one or two lusts must be preferred before Christ’s sceptre and government; some part of Christ’s yoke of commandments they will submit to; but are not pleased that Christ shall impose what he will; they pick and choose: here they will obey, in another thing, *I pray have me excused*: few are brought to say, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* Any thing Lord, I am called to thy feet, as the man of the East was, ready to trudge after thee to the ends of the earth.—*As their Prophet.* Here they divide too; many things they will learn of Christ, but they must partly *lean to their own understandings*, and be *taught for doctrines the traditions of men*. They are also partial in their closing with Christ *as their Priest*. They hope to be saved partly by his mediation,

and partly by their own. As the Papists, so many Protestant professors are for a divided Christ; few are for exalting Christ alone, so as to renounce all other lords, who have had dominion over them, and to count all other teachers besides Christ as vain, absurd, unsound, and weak. Few renounce all their own righteousness, to put the crown on Christ's head alone, to make Christ their only mediator, their only intercessor. No, they must have cisterns of their own to keep their water in, and sands of their own to build upon, and so Christ, *the elect precious stone is refused by the builders*. How many hope to be pardoned partly by Christ, and partly by their civility and new obedience? They lay their title to God, heaven, and glory, partly from Christ's merits, and partly from their own deserts; few whose hopes are founded on Christ's satisfaction alone: but their hopes rise or fall according to what they do for him, rather than according to what he hath done and suffered for them: their hopes of acceptance with God are more from their reformations, than from Christ's *entering within the vail*. If they have peace of conscience they ascribe it to their prayers, rather than to Christ's intercession, and if they pray in secret in their closet, and in their family too, when both before were neglected, they hope to pass by this bridge to heaven; but if it be too short, they will set Christ to patch up what is wanting, that they may land on the other shore. Hence it is that many professors are much more conscientious in their obedience to the moral law, than they are to the law of faith, for that they hope their obedience will stead them as much, if not more than Jesus Christ; but if they understand that without faith there is no pleasing God, then they will labour for a faith that may justify them, rather as an act of theirs,

than in respect of the object Christ. Christ is still used only upon necessity, and to make up the want of somewhat else; but very few dare rest on the merits of Christ alone, so as to see all their righteousness to be as filthy rags. To few is Christ *made of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*. Let me ring a peal in your ears; "You must receive Christ entirely, all Christ, and all of Christ, or you are not Christians, though you have a *name to live*. Christ is coming to distinguish names from things, and then you will curse the day you had the name, or heard of the name; you will have your portion with hypocrites. These are indispensable terms on which Christ will insist; all, or none: Christ as a refiner as well as a Saviour; Christ as a Lord as well as a sacrifice."

VI. If men are persuaded in the horror of their spirits to take Christ as priest, prophet and king, as a mere shift, to shift off their troubles and sorrows, and their sins (the occasions of them), yet their hearts stand off from Christ as an husband, they have not conjugal affections to him, their hearts are not brought over to him, they receive him not into their bosoms, into their choicest affections all this while. There is still some secret lust more precious than Christ; he is not the chief corner stone, whereas to them that believe he is precious, exceeding precious. Few, like Paul, *determine to know nothing else save Christ and him crucified*. One Christ was enough to take up Paul's thoughts to eternity; he did not care what he was ignorant of, so he knew Christ. Though he was brought up at Gamaliel's feet, he laid down all his knowledge at Christ's feet.

1. Are your hearts so drawn to Christ, as to account him the most necessary good in all the world? and all other things to be but adjuncts,

so that you are able to live without them, but not without Christ? Liberty is sweet to a believer; but he can live in a prison, yea, and live merrily too, he can sing there if Christ be within the grate: Bread is sweet, but he can live in a wilderness (a desolate howling desert) and sing there too, as Moses did, if Christ be there, yea and prefer it before Canaan. *If thy presence go not with us, carry us not hence.* A wilderness with Christ is more precious than a Canaan without him. If ye were thorough believers; the world would not be accounted among the necessities. *One thing is necessary*, one, not many. Other things may divert, or may a little refresh, but Christ is the necessary.

2. Is he in a sense the only good to your souls? Is nothing else good separated from Christ? Give a believer what you will without Christ it weighs nothing; he droops as the marigold when the sun withdraws. What is all this whilst I am Christless? There is none good but Christ. Riches are miscalled goods; they are not good save in their reference as they relate to Christ, as they come from Christ, from that bosom of love, and as they advance Christ, and bring Christ and the soul in nearer communion. If the world in its glory, splendor and fulness, hinder communion with Christ, by deadening, flattening, and distracting the heart, it becomes a burthen: he is burthened with friends, relations, enjoyments of all sorts, that rob him of Christ, that eclipse the face of the Sun of Righteousness, through their unhappy interposals. *What was gain is counted loss.* As he enjoyeth much or little of Christ, thereafter he laughs or weeps, he riseth or falleth. In Christ are riches, honours and friends: yea prayers, sermons, sacraments, &c. The Lord is the temple; he is *all in all*: he is all things, and in all things; not

only by way of merit, whatever they have or expect, is on Christ's account; not only by way of conveyance, through him we have all good communicated; not only by way of casualty, as he worketh all in all, but he is all virtually, he is instead of all things to them, he makes up the defect of all things. If no estate, no friends, no liberty, no health, no comfort, &c. yet the believer wanteth nothing; *as having nothing and yet possessing all things*. Thus the woman told the persecutor, when he threatened her, to deprive her of her husband, *Christ is my husband*. Professors look to your hearts, to your affections, and then you will have cause to cry, *my leanness, my leanness, woe unto me, I am a dry tree*.

VII. How few Christians have in their closing with Christ, considered the cost they may be at? They were told of the cross, but the cross was at a great distance, and things when remote seem little. How many little studied the import of that word *cross*? What a shameful, painful, tedious death it imports? Something of trouble they would undergo for Christ, but really they never thought of dying for Christ, of spilling their heart's blood for Christ: So that they did not close with Christ understandingly, either they were ignorant of Christ's person, or of the consequents of closing with him; that they shall be *put out of the synagogues*, and that the *time cometh, that whosoever killeth them, will think that he doth God service*. Hence when unexpectedly *the rain descends, the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon their houses*, (the stately spiritual buildings, which they have been erecting) they do not only totter, but fall, *and great is their fall*. Even cedars are taken up by their roots. How many in such times *put away a good conscience, and concerning faith have made shipwreck*? How many are *trees*,

whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots? They see not the riches of Christ will make them amends for all these losses and perils: they cannot balance the troubles of the flesh with the comforts of the spirit; the present evil things, with the future inheritance in heaven: the temptations they meet with are unexpected. They are like some ladies that put forth to sea for pleasure; they launch forth towards Christ, but as the king of Navarre, who said, he would not venture further, than he could quickly retreat in case of danger. The storm makes them return to their harbour; yea, with the dog to the vomit, and the sow to the mire. These poor souls (O that my heart could bleed for them) were willing to come up to some of Christ's terms, to lose a little, nay, to suffer many things, but they could not endure to lose life. O my soul! weep in secret for them, when thou considerest that *the children of the kingdom* (church members) *shall be cast out into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* God will not abate a tittle of what he requires, he expects that we *take up the cross daily*, that we *hate life itself*, as well as whatsoever else is near and dear unto us. The conditions imposed on his fallen creatures are irreversible, he will never stoop lower. O! this makes many a man to go away sorrowful. I beseech the reader to go over the work of conversion again, now that the cross is in sight, now that tribulation ariseth; now let him see whether Christ is better than name, liberty, friends, relations, livelihood, and life itself; and whether he can believe, that *he that will save his life shall lose it, and he that will lose his life for Christ's sake, shall find it*, and that with advantage.

CHAP. VIII.

Professors deceive themselves by false Signs of closing with Christ.

VIII. **H**OW do many professors shuffle together a company of false signs of closing with Christ? How do they count them true and infallible, which are but questionable; yea, which have been found in unsound hypocritical hearts: and so deceive themselves, as if they had a Christ and real grace within them? How do they live upon these signs comfortably all their days without a Christ? Excuse me, if I bring in their pleas and answer them briefly.

1. I am changed from what I was, nay, changed inwardly. So was Saul, *And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart.* Thou mayest have another heart, and yet not a new heart.

2. I have extraordinary gifts: I was dull, unable to speak of God, tongue-tied among the saints: but I can now hold a discourse with them, and manage some of the highest services as well as they. Might not Saul say so much for himself? had not he the spirit of prophecy to admiration? *When a company of prophets met him, the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them: Then the people said one to another, What is this that is come to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets? The Spirit of God was upon him also at another time, and he went on and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah, and he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in*

like manner, and lay down naked all that day, and all that night. He was so great a proficient, that (as one observes) as soon as he was admitted into the society he commenced doctor, and prophesied with the best of them: they stood and prophesied, he went on, he could run and prophesy; yea, he was so full of the spirit of prophecy, that he neither eat nor drank, nor slept, nor rose; but *lay down naked all the day, and all the night*; he was as in a trance all that while, and wanted neither meat, nor drink, nor clothes, nor sleep.

3. I was full of revenge, but now I am come to such a pitch of religion, that I can pass by offences; yea, pass them by, when I have an opportunity of punishing them that affront me. Had not Saul so much religion? *The children of Belial said, how shall this man save us? and they despised him, and brought him no presents; but he held his peace.* He bears much that can bear being derided.

4. Though I am meek in mine own cause, yet when the name of God, and the church of God suffer, I can be very much inflamed. So was hypocritical Saul, *when Nahash the Ammonite told the men of Jabesh, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel, the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.*

5. I am merciful to men; to mine enemies, because God hath shewed me mercy. So was Saul, *And Saul said, there shall not a man be put to death this day, for this day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel.* Though he was incited to revenge, yet he would not.

6. When I have any mercy from God, I see

God in the mercy, and is not this a good sign? Truly no better than Saul had; *to-day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel.*

7. I engage God with me, before I set upon any considerable undertakings. Did not Saul so much? *Then said I, the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord; I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. And Saul said unto Ahiah, bring hither the ark of God, &c. And Saul asked counsel of God, shall I go down after the Philistines?*

8. When I pray, I look what becomes of my prayer, and I suspend many of my motions, till I have an answer. Saul the hypocrite went so far; he looked after his prayer, and would not go down after the Philistines, because *God answered him not that day.*

9. If I have no answer to prayer, I examine the reason, and I am sure this is more than most professors do. But not more than Saul did, *When God answered him not that day, Saul said, draw ye nigh hither all the chief of the people, and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day.*

10. I am troubled for other men's sins, and cannot but reprove sinners; Is not this a sign of sincerity? I answer, no, unless Saul were sincere. When he was told the people eat the blood, he was troubled, and reproved them too; *he said, ye have transgressed.*

11. My zeal against sin is such, that I punish it wherever I find it: I am impartial in my rebukes of sin; my children, as well as my servants are corrected, if they trespass against the Lord. Hence I conclude mine estate is good. And so might Saul. *As the Lord liveth who saveth Israel, though it (the sin) be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die.*

12. I conclude God loves me from a constant series of smiling providences, that followeth all that I take in hand : I find that the Lord blesseth me in my goings out and comings in ; whatsoever I do doth prosper. And had not Saul strange successes and victories ? When Israel was so low, that they had no weapons for war, nor smiths to make any, *Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, &c. and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them.*

13. I find a readiness to confess others better than myself ; so did Saul with tears in his eyes. *And Saul said, is this thy voice my son David ? And Saul lift up his voice and wept, and he said to David, thou art more righteous than I.*

14. I continuemy duties when I fear God hath rejected me, even in desertion I keep on worshipping. So did Saul, when Samuel told him, *God hath rejected thee*, he desired Samuel to turn again with him, *that he might worship the Lord*, and he prevailed with Samuel to turn again, *and Saul worshipped the Lord.*

15. I see a beauty in the church and people of God. So did Balaam. *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel ! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the rivers sides, as the trees, &c. which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees besides the waters.*

16. I cannot for the greatest advantage be brought to sin against God. Neither could Balaam. *If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, &c.*

17. I live up to the dictates of conscience, though I hazard the displeasure of great men thereby. So did that sorcerer, though *Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together.*

18. I have some sights of another world, and I desire to spend an eternity with the saints. So had Balaam, and did not he desire so much? *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*

19. When I think of the day of judgment, I am affected with it, whereas before I was sottish and secure. So was Felix. *As he (Paul) reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled.*

20. I am an orthodox protestant ; so thou mayest be a teacher too, thou mayest not only know God's will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, but confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law ; and yet fall short of Christ, and of heaven, yea, the name of God may be blasphemed among the Gentiles through thee.

21. I am free from the scandalous evils of the times. So were they in Peter, *They had escaped the pollutions of the world*, yea, and that *through the knowledge of Christ* (which is more than the moral heathens ever had) and yet were dogs and swine still.

22. I live inoffensively, none can lay any thing to my charge. But was not Paul whilst Christless, *touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless* ? At the same time he was persecuting the church of God.

23. I have obeyed the commandments of God for a long time. I am not like a mushroom, soon up, and soon vanishing ; I am a constant servant to the commandments of God. So was the young man in the Gospel ; he said unto Christ, *All these things have I kept from my youth up ; what lack I yet ?*

24. I have enlargements in duties, and satisfy not myself with ordinary duties, but make conscience of extraordinary duties, I fast, and that oft. And did not the *Pharisees make long prayers*, and fast oft? *I fast twice in the week.*

25. I have joys in ordinances, the word of the Lord is sweet and precious, I know the time when it was not so. But did not *Herod hear the word of God gladly?* Did he not see an excellency in John? Had he not his virtues and graces in great esteem? Had he not a reverend behaviour towards him? Did not he observe him, and care to please him? He *heard him*, and that *gladly*: he was much delighted in John's preaching.

26. Nay, but I go farther, for I stir up others to frequent sermons. So did the elders of Israel, *Come I pray you, and hear what is the word, that comes forth from the Lord, &c.*

27. I obey as well as hear; I hear in order to practise. And was not Herod conformable to John's doctrine? though John preached not pleasing things, he was a rough preacher, a *burning* as well, as a *shining* light, yet the text tells us, *he did many things.*

28. When I hear the word I am strangely taken with it. So were the people when they heard Christ, *they were astonished at his doctrine.*

29. Many a time under a sermon my knees and heart ache. So it was with Felix. *As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, &c. Felix trembled.*

30. But I pray, and pray oft as well as hear and therefore is it not well? It may be ill enough, if thou hast no better evidence. *When you make many prayers*—(when you multiply prayer, when you add prayer to prayer,) *yet I will not hear.*

31. There was a time when I felt sin no more, than a dead man feels a mountain upon him ; but now it is heavy ; it is burthensome. And was it not so to Cain? *And Cain said unto the Lord, my punishment (or, mine iniquity) is greater than I can bear.* Was it not so to Judas, when *he repented himself, and restored the thirty pieces of silver, saying I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood, and went and hanged himself?*

32. I have desires after grace, and am willing to be at cost for it. So the foolish virgins. *And the foolish (being awakened out of their security in their form of godliness) said unto the wise, give us of your oil ; yea, they went to buy.* They were willing to be at cost for the power of godliness.

33. I associate only with God's people, yea, with the purest and holiest. So did *the foolish virgins*, they associated not only with virgins, but with the wise virgins. Both wise and foolish *went out together to meet the bridegroom.*

34. I consult ministers for my soul, and have high attainments. But wherein dost thou go beyond those, of whom it is said, *They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways ; as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God ; they ask of me the ordinances of justice ; they take delight in approaching to God?* Wherein dost thou go beyond those in the Hebrews, *who were once enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.* If thou hast not better things than these, thou hast not savingly closed with Jesus Christ, for as yet thou hast nothing *that accompanieth salvation*, from which salvation cannot be separated.

Oh ! I cannot but pity these poor hearts, these Almost-Christians.—Almost Christians and almost saved, I may say they are *not far from the kingdom of God*, and yet in a sense they are farther than any others. Our greatest difficulty hath been to undeceive these, to unchrist these, I mean to take off these fig-leaves, with which they have covered themselves, that they may come to Christ for clothing, and so prevent the appearing of their nakedness. O ! It is hard ~~tough~~ work to persuade a proud Pharisee, that all his righteousness will not assist him, that he must fling away all, that he must have something else to show for heaven and glory. O ! How have men fled in our faces, when we have told them, that yet they have nothing that is essential to a Christian, or which makes a Christian a Christian, no more than a picture hath of the essence of a man ? You may imagine a man, that hath bestowed twenty or thirty years in building, how loath is he to pull down all again ? Though he fears the foundation is but on the sands, he will rather venture, than begin all anew. He is even ashamed to unravel all the clue of his ungrounded confidences. What begin upon a new bottom ? No, not he ; and so Christ and he part. He takes his supposed grace to be a Christ, or at least, that there must be Christ where such changes are, and so cries out, *Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years, yea, for eternity.*

CHAP. XI.

The Ungodliness, Ignorance, and Errors, &c. of Professors.

I. **H**AVE not many professors been ungodly men, men without worship? If to deny or withhold any part of that respect or honour, that is due unto God, be ungodliness; how much ungodliness hath there been; and is there still amongst us? Which of us hath not been guilty of not giving God his right or due honour? Have we not sucked in many ungodly principles? As that it is vain to worship God, there is no happiness (comparable to that which the world doth afford) in communion with God; religion is but a notion and fancy;—policy is the only piety;—this world must be looked after whatever becomes of conscience, &c. Have not we been guilty of ungodly thoughts? Have not we thought that God is not so harsh, but we may take liberty in sinning; that he taketh no notice of what we think, speak, and do, yea, that there is no God? Have not we spoken ungodly words? Have not we uttered those very hard speeches, which ungodly sinners speak? Have not we spoken against God's servants? yea, have we been afraid to speak against his servant Moses? And have not many of our deeds been ungodly, yea, though we have not ungodly committed them? God hath always been sorely provoked by ungodliness; *The flood swept away the world of the ungodly*: but yet we might have been ungodly under the law, at a cheaper rate, than under the gospel; because the gospel gives us more clear, and certain notions of God's excel-

lency and glory, and lays more obligations upon us to respect God, and therefore is called a *doctrine according to godliness*. *The ungodly shall not stand in judgment*, neither in the world to come, nor in this world. The day of judgment is appointed on purpose to take vengeance of *ungodly persons*.

II. Have not some professors been, and still are, altogether ignorant of God? Some have not the knowledge of God; *I speak this* (saith the apostle) *to your shame*. May it not be said of many of us, *Ye worship ye know not what?* Do not many professors worship God upon no other account than the Romans did their Jupiter, or the Ephesians their Diana, viz. because he is the god of the nation wherein they were born; because he was their forefather's god, because his worship is in credit, and because the magistrate commands that god be worshipped? Have not we worshipped God by tradition, more than out of conviction of judgment? Hath not our worship been to the unknown God? God is truly, in a scripture sense unknown to all, that do not know him experimentally and practically. Now, have we *tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious?* Have not we said, we knew God, and yet kept not his commandments? *He that saith so is a liar, and the truth is not in him: Hereby know we that we know him, if we keep his commandments*. If we do not thus know God, we are none of his children, he hath no child so little, but he knoweth his Father: *They shall all know me from the least to the greatest*. Our being the people of God in profession, will not secure us from ruin. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*. *The Lord Jesus will come in flaming fire, to render vengeance on us, for he will so deal with all that know not God.*

III. How erroneous have been professors! None can be such a stranger to our Israel, as to be ignorant that a spirit of delusion hath been let loose abroad, from Dan to Beersheba: so that the pillars of religion are shaken, the most concerning truths questioned, if not exploded with scorn and contempt. "Have not some made God the author of sin? Have not others forgot that they were creatures; and have assumed the liberty, or rather highest impudence, to say, that they were godded, and that the fulness of the God-head doth dwell bodily in every saint, in the same measure as it did in Christ Jesus, whilst he dwelt upon the earth? Nay, have not others affirmed Jesus Christ to be a bastard? Have not others said, They were Christ, and would in the pride of their hearts, have others to worship them? Have not some denied Christ's deity, affirming, That he was not God essentially, but only nominally; yea, that his pure nature was stained with sin? How many have denied the trinity of persons? How many, under pretence that the law of works binds not, have abrogated all the laws of Christ, and turned cursed libertines? How many have, under pretence of advancing the Spirit's testimony, maintained sanctification to be a dirty qualification, and cried down all marks and signs? How many have held, that the doctrine of repentance, fasting, and humiliation, are too legal for the spirit of a Christian? How many have denied Christ's sitting in a body, at the right hand of God? How many have denied his satisfaction and purchase? Have not some held that there is no heaven, no hell, no resurrection from the dead, and that the beast and man have one common end? How many have been altogether for inspiration, and professed themselves above the sphere of all ordinances? How many have denied water baptism,

the supper, the ministry, yea, the Scriptures of God? How many have accounted it their highest perfection, to sin away all tenderness of conscience, and looked upon themselves the more holy, by how much villainy they could be guilty of beyond others?

How can we refrain from weeping out our eyes; how should our ears tingle to see and hear these abominations? How hath the God of truth been provoked by these cursed miscreants? What horrible affronts have been offered to the dreadful majesty of God thereby? How many thousand souls have perished by these delusions? And what a dishonour hath come to the Christian religion by reason thereof, I cannot express. Certainly (saith Bp. Hall) there is more deadly mischief, and higher offence to God in them, than in those practical evils, which honest hearts profess to abhor: These, as they are immediate fruit of our spiritual part, so they do more immediately strike at the God of Spirits in his truth and holiness: and as religion is the highest concernment of the soul, so the depravation of religion must needs be the most dangerous and damnable. When Hezekiah heard the blasphemies of Rabshekah, it is said, *He rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord, and said, This is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy.* If an Assyrian blasphemer was so great a troubler, what troublers are nominal Christians, thus abusing their profession, and the God they pretend to serve.

But alas! How little have we been affected with *the flood cast out of the serpent's mouth after the woman?* Though the trumpet hath sounded, *Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth,* because of spiritual plagues; *We have*

been puffed up, and have not mourned. We have spoken laughingly of those sins; we have not considered this judgment, as coming from the Lord, as a token of his wrath (in giving up so many of our countrymen to strong delusions, to believe lies). We have shewed little zeal for God's glory, that hath been blemished by these detestable things: neither have we pitied the many that followed these pernicious ways. How little have we mourned for them, though the apostle saith, *their damnation slumbereth not.*

How few means have we used for their reduction? hardly put up a prayer for them? not admonished them, but let them alone to perish in their delusions? Not so much as requested an able minister to have recourse to these poor deluded souls in order to the turning of them from the idols of their own brains?

How little have we endeavoured to strengthen ourselves: to prepare antidotes against this infection? We have not studied the scriptures, that we might warn the unruly, and resist gainsayers, and be established in the present truths; but, though we have seen so many shipwreck their faith and consciences, yet we have been high-minded, and have not feared.

Have we not been guilty of not expressing our dislike of the ways of heretics as we should? We have not shunned them as we ought. To maintain a party to strengthen a faction, how have we too much countenanced them? their fellowship hath not been enough avoided. How little have we regarded those apostolical injunctions? *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them, which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them; for they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies; and by good*

words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple. And if any man obey not our word, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. We have shunned the house where one affected with the plague dwells, but we have not *withdrawn from them that cause to err from the words of knowledge.*

What shall I say? We have not so heartily and vigorously *contended for the faith, which was once*, and but once, *delivered to the saints*, as we ought. The Lord humble us for our lukewarmness. We have cried up moderation, and counted him a scourge of the saints, that hath appeared against the abominations of the head. Sure we have not been *valiant for the truth upon the earth.* We have not sparkled so much the more in an holy zeal, because others have perverted the right ways of the Lord. Because fools have not been answered, they have grown wise in their own conceit. We have been afraid to meddle with some, because they have (unreasonably) shrouded themselves under the name of saints, but *Paul withstood Peter to the face*, when truth was like to suffer. I do not in all this go about to justify undue rigors. God knows how for base respects, interests, names of our own, we have been too severe against some things of less moment, some circumstances of church government, &c. too much zeal about mint and annise: we have been too imposing of what lies dark and obscure in the book of God: and this while the enemies' tares are suffered to grow, and the fundamentals of our religion have been (at least) endangered. But that which hath been England's sin, is too much permitting and countenancing of damnable doctrines. What shall I say? When God hath said, *Who is on my side? who!* We have hardly answered for ourselves. We have been *doubtful in the faith*,

wavering and reeling, not quite on, nor quite off, but staggering and tottering : Our religion hath been rather opinion, than faith, so that we have stood looking on as neuters, whilst heretics have *made merchandise of souls with feigned words*. The great truths of God have lain loose upon our hearts, they have not been fastened by the master of the assemblies, *as nails in a sure place* : and having little experience of what we profess to know, hence luke-warmness followeth on course; or blind zeal for our ancestors' religion.

O ! how by reason of the great defection amongst us hath *the way of truth been evil spoken of* ? Thy common enemy fasteneth all upon religion. They will not distinguish between truth and error, yea between truth and heresy, and never would put a difference between the orthodox and the heterodox ; but if any one that had been called a Christian, fell into any damnable errors or practices, all Christians suffered thereby ; which forced the primitive fathers to pen remonstrances, confessions of faith, and apologies, that they might clear Christ and his church from being mother or nurse to such a cursed progeny. And though some amongst us have by confessions of faith, and otherwise, borne witness against errors, yet doubtless our consciences will tell us, that we have not by fastings prayers, studies, and all endeavours improved all our time and spirits for the suppressing and drying up *the flood of the serpent*, the soul-destroying flood, as we should ; but if we have had any acrimony of spirit, we have let it forth upon them, that have crossed us about modes of government ; rather than against them, who have shaken the foundation of our religion. When I consider the multitudes of sects that have been and are still amongst us, I wonder not

that the gospel hath had a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts. In all times Christianity hath suffered hereby. Sozomen saith, that "many would have followed Christ, but they were discouraged by the divers doctrines amongst his followers." Chrysostom professeth that an heathen told him, "He would become a Christian, but he knew not to what party of them to join, there are so many opinions and contentions among Christians." When the multitude of Christians were one-souled, then fear, and awe, and reverence upon all the people; But now that *one saith I am of Paul, &c.* Now religion is had in derision, and Atheism grows exceedingly. *O that mine head were as waters, &c.*

CHAP X.

Their want of Love to God.

IV. **W**ANT of love to God is another great branch of ungodliness abounding amongst professors. This is so great a branch of ungodliness, that Jesus Christ hath reduced all the commandments of the first table concerning the worship of God to this great one, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and all thy might.* Indeed every one pretends to love God: I hardly ever met with a person but said, he loved God: *He that hateth, dissembleth with his lips.* God may say truly, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thy heart is not with me? God is loved, but not for himself; but for what he brings. God is used, and the world is embraced. If God comes empty handed, or with his hands full of trouble, misery, &c. Farewell. God is loved, but with a

secondary love ; professors are *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.* God must stand by, and give place to sensuality, therefore they say unto God, Depart, &c. They like God whilst they may enjoy their pleasures too, whilst they may not be infringed. Let but a few things be considered, and we will see how much want there is of love to God in Christ.

1. Whom we love, we are not ashamed of. The mother's is such to her child, and God's to us, *he is not ashamed to be called our God.* But do not we conceal our title to God in some companies that hate him ? How do we throw off our livery, and dare not be known to have *walked with God.* Remember *he that is ashamed of me, &c.*

2. Parents are troubled when their children are dishonoured, and so children when their fathers ; but are our souls vexed, *racked with the filthy conversation of Sodomites ?* Where are the *rivers of waters ?* Where is thy *horror because men keep not God's commandments ?*

3. Those we love, their enemies are ours ; parent's enemies are the children's enemies. But do we *hate them that hate God, yea, with a perfect hatred ?*

4. True lovers of God hate themselves for not loving God enough. How oft do they thus sigh ? " Wretch that I am, thus to grieve God, to estrange myself from God, so seldom to be with God, to stay with him no longer ! How can I content myself with these transient glances, with these sudden casts of mine eye ; and to be instantly wheeled off from my God again ? O this fleeting mind of mine ! when will it fix on God and abide with him ? O this gadding heart of mine ! when will it centre in its true and perfect happiness ? When I turn mine eye from earthly objects, either I am displeased with

them, or there is some better thing that draws off my mind and heart : but dare I say so of God ? that he is unlovely ? and yet I have been weary of him."

5. Did we love God we would trust him, we dare trust our very lives in a friend's hands : but we dare not so trust God. What would a carnal man give that he had but his life and health at his own disposal ? When he is poor he had rather it were in his own hands to support his wants, than in God's ; for he thinks it would go better with him. We trust God for little. We think ourselves quite undone, when we have nothing save a God and a promise to trust to.

6. How little do we joy in the presence of God and Christ, and grieve for their absence ? Is God all in the want of all, and is God the all in the enjoyment of all ? Can we say, *shew us the Father and it sufficeth us*. When we have no fig-tree left, can we *rejoice in the God of our salvation* ? Can we say, *Take all Ziba, now that my Lord is come, now that the Lord stoops to dwell in houses of clay*. O worldlings ! take your riches, and make the best of them, I envy you not, I have enough in God. Do we so grieve for the absence of God and Christ, that nothing but God and Christ can make amends ? O that our happiness, life, comforts, were folded up in God and Christ ; Can we live no more without God and Christ, than a beam without the sun ?

7. True lovers are thoughtful to please the beloved. But is there any thing that we think less of than pleasing of God ? A true lover of God is always *proving what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God*. *Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord*. He is still searching that he may know more wherein he may please God, as willing always to be more useful for God :

what have I to do more ? but how seldom do we ask our hearts, what way may we *walk in all well pleasing* ? How seldom do we design for the glory of God ?

8. True lovers are open-handed, and bountiful to God: they bestow readily and freely any thing they have on him: they will part with their Isaac's, their dearest things, with limbs, &c. Rutherford, that man of God, wished every limb a man, every bone a man, yea, every hair a man to set forth the praises of God. When God calls for limbs, can we say, farewell to them ? Are there not some things so dear to us that we cannot spare them to Christ ? Are we so taken with Christ, that our hearts are disengaged from the love of other things ? Is every thing vile, but Christ ? Is all you part from instantly supplied in the loves and smiles of Christ ?

9. True lovers of God are contented with nothing by way of return from God, save only love from him: returns of love they must have. They do not pray save for love, they go not in before God for corn, wine, oil, &c. but for love, for God to open his heart, to take off his mask from his lovely face, and shew them the light of his countenance. They are not like the raven, that came to Noah, more for necessity than delight. *Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee: With my soul have I desired thee; in the night, yea, with my spirit within me, will I seek thee early.*

10. True lovers are wont to praise each other: but how seldom do we set forth the praises of Christ ? Love is witty, full of eloquence, witness the Spouse, *My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand, his head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, black as a raven, his eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers*

of waters, washed with milk and fitly set, his cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers, his lips like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh: his hands are like gold rings set with the beryl, his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires, his legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold, his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars, his mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely. *This is my beloved, &c. I will praise thee with uprightness: I will praise thee seven times a day.* Yea, David thought seven times a day too little, and therefore he called in all the creatures of heaven and earth, air and sea, to praise God, the dragons in the deep must not be silent. True lovers praise God as much as they can, they exalt God to the utmost of their power: and then, from a sense that God is above all their praise, they would have *every thing that hath breath to praise the Lord*; yea, and inanimates also, to join in the choir. *Doth praise wait for God?*

11. Did you love God, you would love every thing of God: Do you love his omnipresence, his justice, his holiness? True love to Christ is not merely confined to the person of Christ, but reacheth to all who have an union with him. Do we love Christ mystical, as well as personal? Are we of catholic spirits? The apostle is peremptory, and brandeth them all as liars, that pretend to love God and Christ, and do not love saints.

12. True lovers of God thirst after nearer communion with God, *My soul followeth hard after thee.* The soul still encroacheth upon God. *Let me see thy glory*, saith Moses, though he saw more than mortals were (commonly) permitted to behold, yet *Semper avarus eget*, Much would have more. *As the hart panteth after*

the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God : my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God ? A true lover of God is under an holy impatience, till he ceaseth to see darkly in a glass : He would fain see with open face. O ! (saith such a soul) the distance between Christ and me is too great ; O ! I cannot but groan earnestly, when I consider I am *absent from the Lord, whilst present in the body*, “ Lord, (said Austin) I will die, that I may enjoy thee ; I will not live, but I will die : I desire to die, that I may see Christ ; and refuse to live, that I may live with Christ.” The broken rings, contracts, and espousals, content not the true lover ; but he longs for the marriage-day. Here are clouds that oft pass between God and my soul, O that I were above them ! Here, if I see and enjoy, the fear of losing so sweet a sight, abates the comfort of fruition ; but then welcome an eternal day, that shall never have a night.

13. If you loved God, his commandments would not be grievous to you. Love cannot be easy posed : love hath a kind of almightiness in it, so that heavy burdens are made light, and almost impossible things become feasible. But of how many things do we say, *What a weariness is it ?* How are you haled by governors, by conscience, and by the terrors of the law unto duties ? how like slaves chained to galleys, you must work, though sore against your wills ? Did you love God, you would count nothing tedious, save dulness, in his service. Sin would only be the weight. O the burden of formality, pride, &c. ! But O the pleasures of the ways of God ! *His yoke is easy, his burden light.*

14. Did you love God, you would be jealous, lest it should go ill with God's affairs. The loving mother trembleth lest the child should suf-

fer, when she is away from it. But alas ! how few Elis are there, *whose hearts tremble because of the ark?* Do you really fear lest formality should eat out the power of godliness, lest *traditions* should *make void the commandments of God*, lest your trades should spoil your communion with God.

You may easily imagine, the want of love to God must necessarily be a great provocation. O to pretend love, and yet Judas-like, *betray Christ with a kiss* ; to say, *Hail Master*, and yet prefer a base lust before him ? What an indignity is it to the husband, that the wife loves the slave before him ? The world should be your slave, but it hath got the heart, the bosom, and Christ must *stand without doors till his locks are wet*. O that God should stoop so low, as to love you, as to make you the birth of his everlasting counsels of love ; that he should carry you long in the womb of his eternal purpose : This goodly fabric of heaven and earth hath not been erected, but as a stage, whereon he would show his love to you. And did he not, in the fulness of time, purchase you by the blood of his first-born, yea of his only begotten Son ; and for this very end, that he might gain your love, as well as reveal his own love ? And yet that your love should not be like an echo, which returneth what it receiveth ? Sure you should cast back God's beams of love upon himself. This is all he expects, *My son, give me thine heart*. All the command he lays upon you, is, in one word, *to love him*. God might have commanded our children to be sacrificed, *to pass through the fire*. O ! what a favour is it to love the Lord ? That God will honour us so far, as to suffer us to love him ? And yet we love any thing, any sordid base lust, rather than God.

We would count it a favour, if a prince would give us a private key, to come to him when we please : here is more honour, we may have recourse to the bosom of God when we will. God would have us love him *with all the heart, with all the soul*. The Lord would not lose one grain of our love. O that we should deny him that which he (with reverence be it spoken, and (thought on) is so fond of. *And now Israel, what doth the Lord require of thee, but to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul*. God requires not now cattle upon a thousand hills, or rivers of oil ; only love me, love me, love me heartily, constantly, chiefly ; and yet we deny him our loves. O ! I hate myself whilst writing this, that I love the Lord so little, so seldom : It was he *that made me, and not I myself* : he hath wonderfully formed me, and wonderfully preserved me, and *shewed many wonders in the deeps* to me. O ! what shall I do to love the Lord with a superlative love ? O I am ready to say, Let me love nothing, if I love not thee : nay, love nothing till I love thee ! O that you would grieve abundantly for want of love to God ! You have past as through the Red Sea, you have been as the flaming bush, God hath looked after you, as if he minded none but you, you have been as the signet on his right hand ; nay more, you have been *engraven on his palms*, and what, not love the Lord ? Shame upon you, that you can doat upon the dark, filthy, dirty world, and neglect the Lord of Glory. All the affections you have, God gave them, (when he gave thee a reasonable soul) but for this end, that you should place them on himself, and not on his enemy. Is it not hard measure that God should be denied love, when he gave you power to love ? If a friend sends you bottles of wine,

it it hard, that when he comes to you, you should deny him a taste of his bounty. Believe it, sirs, whatever you do for the Lord, unless you love him, yea, unless you love him more than any thing else, it is not accepted. *Though you give your body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth you nothing.* Though you bring forth fruit yet you are empty vines, because you eye self, not God. Your most exquisite services will not be accepted, unless they be seasoned with the salt of love. This people *draw nigh with their lips*, but I abhor them, and their duties, because the silly dove is without an heart. Whatever a man gives me, if his heart be not in it, I slight it: God much more. What shall I say? The holy apostle counts him worthy of a curse, that loves not Jesus Christ. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha.* And is it not sad to be cursed to *the coming of Christ*? He deserves it that loves not Christ, and he must and shall be forced to own the righteousness of God in sentencing him to eternal flames, who might have been secured against them, had he but loved Christ more than a base dunghill lust.

CHAP. XI.

Professors entertain evil Surmises of God.

V. **E**VIL surmises of God is another piece of ungodliness found too frequently among some of the more raised professors, even such as have the root of the matter in them. I shall the rather insist on this sin, because right thoughts of God are the fuel which maintains the fire of re-

ligion : without which it soon decayeth and is extinguished.

1. Do not we miscale God's love-tokens ? Hath not God sent thee many love-tokens by his Spirit to assure thee that he owns thee and delights in thee, as his spouse ? For thee to question thy relation to him upon every turn must necessarily be grievous to him ; how grievous then is it for thee to deny all his tokens of grace and love to thy soul, and to count them but delusions, but the works of the infernal spirit, transforming himself into an angel of light ? To call light, darkness : good, evil ; sweet, bitter ; the work of Christ the devil's work, is ill resented by the Lord, it goeth unto his heart. You that are husbands, wives, parents, children, cannot endure to have your love and fidelity suspected upon every base suggestion and whisper. Believe it, God takes notice, and lays to heart all your jealousies of him, all your base unworthy censures of him.

2. How ill are God's providences resented ? Although God hath told you there is a beauty in their contexture, that *things present and things to come are yours*, that *all shall work together for good*, that your providential losses, as well as your providential enjoyments, that your changes, as well as your settlings, your wants, as well as your abundance shall all be sanctified to you : yet how few, with that blessed man, *bless the Lord when taking away ?* And with Paul, *rejoice, yea, glory in tribulations ?* God assures you, that your sicknesses, reproaches, wants, shall do you good, yea death shall do you good, all shall be good, or do you good, all shall be food or physic ; *out of the eater shall come forth sweetness* ; even from God's desertions you shall have advantages, your very thorns shall drop honey, shall bear grapes ; yet, notwith-

standing, what hard thoughts have you of God under such dispensations? Didst thou only accuse thyself, judge thyself, abhor thyself, it were well; but in speaking against thyself, thou fallest foul upon God himself by questioning his love from these providences. Deny thyself what thou wilt, but beware of a denial of God's love, and of the Spirit of grace, that hath taken up his abode within thee: O that all melancholy doubting Christians would consider of this (too seldom suspected) provocation and unkindness of theirs towards God! O take up, and keep up better thoughts of God, whatever his carriage be towards you: *Though he slay you, yet trust in him.* When will you be as David, who though surrounded by enemies, yet kept up good thoughts of God, he doubted not of God's pity, of God's favour, and protection, and therefore *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear, &c. in this will I be confident.* In what? Why, that *the Lord is my light and my salvation, and the strength of my life.* God hath not spent all his stores, he hath enough for me, *he will not suffer me to be tempted above what I shall be able to bear, but will with the temptation make a way for my escape.* And hath not God told thee, that *the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; yet his loving-kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed?* But alas! Thou canst entertain good thoughts of God in fair weather, but let them fall in a storm: then it is, *Master, carest thou not that we perish.*

Thou canst trust in God when he carrieth himself as a friend, and answereth all thy requests, and granteth all thy desires, but not so,

when he seemeth an enemy. Canst thou with Paul say, *I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?* While the candle of the Lord shines on thy tabernacle, whilst thy bones are full of marrow, while thou *washest thy feet in butter*, while every *Mordecai boweth in the gates*, while thou hast dews on thy heart, melt-ings and enlargements in ordinances; so long thou canst keep up good thoughts of God and his love; but let the scene be altered, let the sun wrap up itself in a cloud of darkness, let the rod be on the back, and the *arrows of the Almighty pierce the heart*; and then not only grace within is questioned, but the love of God without, *I am cast out from before thine eyes, his mercy is clean gone*. Then *all men are liars*, even Samuel himself. But alas! how ignorant art thou of the methods of God? Doth not he *chasten every son that he receiveth*? Should not he have liberty to use what rod he pleaseth, whilst all are *for thy profit, that thou mayest partake of his holiness*? Might not Christ have had ill surmises of his Father upon higher grounds, than any thou canst name? Who art thou, to hope for milder usage from God, than he shewed to his own natural son? If thou art *predestinated to be conformable to Christ*, to be *partaker of his sufferings*, to *drink of his cup*, wilt thou doubt thy filiation from thy filling up the sufferings of Christ?

3. How do some draw sad conclusions from God's providential dispensations concerning his intentions for the future? When they lose dear relations, an husband, or the wife of the bosom gone, a sweet child snatched away, and perhaps by inadvertency; O then no sooner can we en-

ter into the house of mourning, but we hear cries from you, O my hypocrisy ! O my formality ! O this is one of God's arrows of vengeance ! O ! God is beginning his controversy, which will never end, till it lays me as low as hell ! Whereas you should entertain other thoughts of God, viz. " That now he is removing the idols of jealousy, now he is weaning your hearts from creatures, that he may have all your love ; he knew how much spiritual communion you have lost by the company of your relations, and now he himself would have more of your company ; now he would have you to delight yourselves more in himself ; now he hath but dried the stream (a weak, unsatisfying stream) that you may drink, and drink abundantly of the purest crystal waters, that drop from the blessed fountain immediately ; now God hath a blessed design of grace to prepare you for glory ; he is now making the earth an howling wilderness, that you may long for Canaan, he is now leaving you to naked walls, that he himself may fill them ; he is now turning all out of doors, that you may have the more liberty to treat with his majesty, with the less disturbance, without interruption. Alas ! you know not how unkind and burdensome, yea treacherous, your friend, your relation might have been, if continued longer to you ; you know not what dishonour to God and to yourselves, he might have been, if longer continued in the land of the living, and therefore to preserve him from scandal, and yourselves from heart-breakings thereby, God hath in mercy, pity, and faithfulness, removed him, taking him away (it may be) from the evil to come." Few put these comments upon God's providences towards them ; but commonly take all in the worst sense they can.

4. How do some instantly call in question God's love, if evidences be not seen, if they be not fairly writ, so as the soul can read them? But may not the money be in the sack's mouth, though the brethren see it not for a while? Yea, though the soul hath had a welcome from God, yea, many a welcome, yet how soon is the soul so cast down that it is afraid to go into God's presence? and through the power of Satan and melancholy, duty, yea, many duties have hereby been intermitted? This provokes God exceedingly: What! When you have had his staff, and his bracelets, when you have had such admirable proofs of his love, in sending his Son, and Holy Spirit after you, to work so great and glorious a change in you, coming in the still voice, and whispering love unto you, welcoming you again and again to the throne of grace, often filling your empty bottles, answering your thousand doubts, sealing the covenant of grace, and granting and confirming to you all the patents of love: and yet at every turn have you doubted, whether God love you or no? God chides Zion, for this, *Let not Zion say, the Lord hath forsaken, &c.*

5. Are there not some good souls (though their goodness lies not in this) that are apt to question the love of God to them, from the blasphemous thoughts and injections that they are harassed with? But what, because Satan is your adversary, must God therefore not be your friend? Because Satan doth tempt you, will it therefore follow, that God doth not love you? Were we not wonderfully prone to evil surmises and distrusts of God, we would not make Satan's malice a ground sufficient to doubt of the love of God. Doth the husband love his wife the less, for that she is tempted, while she defies the

tempter, and is burthened with his foul and daring solicitations ?

O how is Satan gratified hereby ? He is the great accuser, the great tale-bearer, that separateth choice friends : he goeth betwixt God and saints, as a mediator of differences, to accuse saints to God, and God to saints, and will you any longer be tale-bearers against God ? Believe it, the false witness which he brings, is against him, who hath given you wonderful proofs of his everlasting love towards you. When, O ! when will you complain of Satan, in the words of the Psalmist ? *The enemy hath persecuted my soul, he hath made me to dwell in darkness, like those that have been long dead.* It is the enemy that vails and obscures the work of the Spirit what he can, that you shall see it no more than a dead man can behold any company that is in the room, vault or grave with him. When Satan tells you, your graces are counterfeit, your faith but that which a temporary may have, your graces but moral virtues ; O ! how soon is your enemy credited ? how much more believed than God, his ministers, and all the testimonies of God's love, that are brought you ? Hence you are one day jealous of the kindness of Christ, another day of the fulness of Christ, then of the intentions of Christ, he means no good to me : Hence also you doubt of the acceptance of your persons and duties ; " There is a cloud hangs over my prayers, that they cannot pass up : if I come to Christ he will not look on such a wretch as I am." Many such hard thoughts of Christ are suggested by Satan, and too soon entertained by us : In this state, you can never thank God for any mercy ; for you doubt whether it be a mercy to you. " Can you bless him for life, health, and length of days, while you have this suggestion, that your ac-

count swells with your time? Can you bless God for estates, honours, friends, &c. when you have this jealousy, that God is fattening you as sheep for the slaughter? Can you bless God for ordinances, whilst you suspect that there is a commission given forth, that *though you have eyes, yet you shall not see*, &c. And that the sun is to harden you, whilst it softens others? Yea, how can you bless God for Christ, when you imagine he is set for your fall?

By giving way to these jealousies, you dam up the springs of praise, that should flow from your lips day and night. Hereby you will also be hindered from waiting on the Lord, with that free and cheerful spirit as ye ought. I cannot wait on an enemy, as on a friend. If I have cursed jealousies of any man, I find no pleasure to be in his company; and if he employs me about any thing, I go grudgingly about it. The truth is, "So long as you entertain suspicions of God's willingness to make you happy, and to afford you sufficient means to make you happy, all your religion will degenerate into a spurious and base-born devotion. Instead of that free and friendly converse that ought to be maintained between God and your souls, you will only flatter him in a servile manner, and bribe him not to be your enemy. Worship God you must, for fear of incurring his displeasure, and lest your neglects of him should rouse up his anger against you; but you cannot entertain any cheerful and friendly society with a Being which appears in a dress so horrible to your souls. Now between this necessity of coming to him, and that fearfulness to approach him, what can there be begotten, but a forced and constrained devotion, which because you do not love, you would willingly leave, did not the dread and horror you have in your souls of him, drag you to

his altars ? And what are you wont to do there ? Truly nothing but cry, and look as if you were going to execution, till you can flatter yourselves into some hopes that he is moved by your cries, and forced submissions, to lay aside his frowns, and cast a better aspect upon you : But your hard thoughts of God returning, you are constrained to renew your slavish devotions, that you may purchase another gracious look from him. In this circle do your poor souls spend many days, and advance not one step towards the New Jerusalem."

No wonder therefore if God be so provoked at this sin of evil surmises. This is what I have observed very common among the Lord's people, they will pray with some earnestness, and perhaps have some confidence that God is gracious, and will answer their prayers, and grant all their desires : but no sooner off from their knees, (but if they think of God, yet) they lay down their expectations of receiving any thing from God, and fall to distrusting and to renew their jealousies of God as soon as they have done praying. What ! Is God yea and nay ? Is he kind when thou art on thy knees, and unkind as soon as off ? Will God take it well from thee, that in thy duties thou shalt put to thy seal that God is true, and loving, and minds thy good ? And presently take off the seal, yea, rather seal to a parchment of the devil's drawing ; that God is false, churlish, and one that seeks thy ruin ? O ! whilst there is a devil, and a melancholy humour to be wrought upon, I do even despair to see this cursed God-dishonouring and debasing sin, to be quite rooted out of the hearts of Christians ; but yet it is a provocation, and *let it be for a lamentation*,

CHAP. XII.

The Unthankfulness of Professors.

V. **U**NTHANKFULNESS is another piece of ungodliness of which professors are very guilty, praise, or thankfulness is as the penny or pepper-corns which God expects as acknowledgment, as high rent, to be paid him for all we hold of him. But how hath this been denied? And thereby how justly have we forfeited all into the hands of God? Though the paying of this rent-penny be the only heavenly work that can be done on earth; the only joyful employment, that shall last to all eternity in another life; a work that should ever wait for God in Zion, and therefore Zion is called Israel my glory; not only because God glorieth in Zion, but because Zion should continually glorify God: yet how unthankful are most professors? The very heathens will rise up in judgment against unthankful Christians; they had their hymns to their Gods. Plato when ready to die, gave God thanks for three things;—that he was made a man; that he was born in Greece; and that he lived in the time of Socrates. How much more should our *lips shew forth the high praises of God*, who hath made us not only men, but new men; That we are born of God, adopted the children of the Most High, and regenerated by the Spirit? That we have breathed not in Greece, but in England, in Ariel, a place of visions, in the Valley of Vision? O the riches of free-grace! that our mothers conceived with us in this place of light, and at such a time when the nation was most enriched with the light of

the gospel, when it was full of gracious ministers, the best that ever the world saw since the apostles' days.

Why had not God brought thee out of the womb when this land was overrun with Paganism? with Popery? Why had not the Lord shut thee up and imprisoned thee with the rest of the world in darkness, and in the shadows of death? O that, when the gospel shines but upon a little spot of ground, which God hath enclosed for himself, and stiles it his *pleasant place*, his *garden*, that thou shouldst be the man *born there*! That when the rest of the world is like the barren mountains, on which no rain falls, and brings forth nothing but briars, that God should bring thee forth in the place of his tabernacle! And yet thou, ungrateful wretch, wilt hardly confess, that *the lines are fallen happily*, and that *thou hast a goodly heritage*. How seldom is such language as this heard from thee? "Blessed be the Lord that my lot is fallen in so fair a ground: blessed be God that I was born in England, and not in the wastes of Arabia, or America; thanks be to the Lord, that I have had more than the light of the sun, moon, and stars to conduct me to Jesus, that so many wells of salvation have been opened unto me, which have been shut unto the most of the world." But to return to Plato: If he thanked God for living in the days of Socrates, we may say, that greater than Socrates have been amongst us. We have had those, *with whom we have taken sweet counsel, with whom together we have gone to the house of God*, who have been burning as well as shining lights; many examples of close-walking heavenly Christians have we enjoyed, such as have had *the wisdom from above*, and more pure learning, than ever Socrates or Plato could

pretend to. The society of how many heavenly, grave, serious, active, fruitful Christians have we been blest with, such as have been faithful admonishers, such as would not suffer sin to rest upon us, such as have daily told us, *here is the way, walk herein?* O the helps we have had! But O the cursed unthankfulness of our hearts towards God, notwithstanding his bestowing upon us so many lights to guide us, so many fires to warm us, and so much salt to season us!

1. Instead of giving God the glory of all, how have we sacrificed to our own nets, and to other instruments? We have praised ourselves, rather than God for what we have. We have not ascribed the glory to God, but to instruments: like that cardinal who writ down how much such a prince honoured him, what such a lord did for him, and what such a pope conferred on him: whereupon another infers, This man remembered his friends, but forgot God. *Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands;* but God hath little or no share in the triumph.

2. How sensible are we of our wants and straits? But O! how unaffected with the goodness of God toward us? How full of complaints are we? But empty of acknowledgments? Hath not the want of some one thing robbed us of the comfort of all our enjoyments, and God of the praise that was due to his name? We have been (such is our wayward nature) more troubled for the want of some one thing, than thankful for many mercies: Like Haman, one Mordecai not bowing to our desires, hath made us heavy and senseless under all our honours, and God's vouchsafements: Like Ahab, we have been more dejected for want of Naboth's vine-

yard, than we have blessed God for a kingdom.

3. Are not we oftener, longest, and heartiest in the petitionary part of prayer? We are still craving the supply of wants; but seldom, very seldom, too too seldom blessing of God for what we are stored with: Our petitions are long, but praises are short; to whom *be praise, honour, and glory*, serves for a sufficient doxology: Yea, how earnest, how fervent, how importunate are we in the petitionary part, but how dull and heartless are we in the gratulatory part of prayer.

4. Do not we set up our rest in being glad of mercies and deliverances? Whereas it is one thing to be glad of a mercy or deliverance, but another thing to be thankful for it. Then are they glad: but that will not serve the turn; it is a return of a higher nature, which God looks for: *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!*

5. Are not we unmindful of the gracious dealings of God with us? Have not we forgotten the God of our salvation, and been *unmindful of the rock of our strength*? "He is an unthankful man (saith Seneca) that denies a benefit received; so is he that dissembles it, together with him that requires it not: but of all the rest, he is most unthankful, that hath forgotten it."

6. Have not we neglected to make catalogues of the mercies we have received, to help our memories? How can we that have not, and will not submit to this divine ordinance, look upon ourselves as some of God's Israel! *This God hath ordained for a law and a statute for Israel*: What was this ordinance? *That they should write it* (what God had done for them), and so provide, that the generations to come might

know what God had done. But alas ! how little care have we, that *whatsoever God does, may be for ever to his glory* ? How unjust are we unto our children, and the generations to come, in depriving them of a faithful record of God's mercies to us, in which God speaks to them, as well as unto us ? What God spake to Jacob at Bethel, he spake to Israel, that lived in Hosea's time, above a thousand years after it : *There he spake with us*. How injurious to them ? By such a faithful record, they might read the right way in sailing heaven-ward ; by our falls they might know where lie the rocks and quicksands ; and by our deliverances, where outgates are to be found

7. Have not we been too silent concerning the goodness of God towards us ? How seldom do we with David say, *Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul* ? How unlike saints are we ? *Thy saints shall bless thee ; they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power to make known to the sons of men thy mighty acts. I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that he hath bestowed on me, &c.* So sings Zion.

8. Have not we neglected to call on others to join with us in the blessing of God ? When did we make a collection of praises from our friends, that would gladly have been in the choir ? A thankful heart is filled with enlarged desires, that others, that all, would join in the work of praising God. A gracious heart doth not think it enough to praise God alone ; though it would be praising God, were there none in heaven or earth to bear it company.

But I shall speak more particularly, and instance in some of those choice personal mercies

(to wave national ones) for which the best of us are too unthankful.

How have we forgot the hole, and deep pit, and miry clay, out of which we were digged? Have not we been unmindful of the blessed jubilee, when the prisoners were let out of the prison-house? Paul remembereth many circumstances of his conversion, the place wherein, in a journey nigh to Damascus: the time when, about noon: the manner how, suddenly there did shine from heaven a great light round about me, and I fell to the ground, and heard a voice, &c. He remembered also what he was before conversion: I was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious. What saith God? Remember this day; What day? The day wherein you were delivered from the house of bondage under sin, the world, and satan, O! how have we forgotten, that the Lord, by a strong and irresistible work of his blessed Spirit, translated us out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of his dear Son? It was he that made Jordan to give back, and delivered us from Egypt and the Wilderness, that we might inherit the good land. O! what enemies were we, studying to be damned, galloping to hell, till God met us?

How seldom do we look back to the spring from whence all our mercy flows? How unthankful have we been for that original fountain-mercy, eternal election? Why should God single us out a people for himself? Why did grace blossom from eternity? Why did God plot and study my happiness before I had a being? What was there, that Jacob is smiled upon, and Esau not so? God might have had his revenues of glory out of my ruin. O that he should glorify the riches of his mercy in my salvation! And yet how little is God magnified for this?

How little do we bless God for Christ? Though he be the *stream that alone refresheth the city of God*, yet how seldom is his love, his stoops and condescensions for us, his bleeding and dying for us, remembered by us with hearty praises and thanksgivings?

How little do we bless God for the covenant of grace, which Mr. Allen excellently calls, "The bow in the cloud, after a deluge of sin and misery, the forfeited lease of eternity renewed, the Magna Charta of the city of God, the hopes of sinners, and the riches of saints?" And in particular for the promise of the Spirit, in all his offices and operations, for the application of the purchased possession? *I will put my Spirit within you.*

How little do we remember to bless the Lord for outward salvations? You began, perhaps, with a little, as Jacob, *and now behold you have two bands*, a troop of children, friends, &c. and an estate to maintain them. When others have had one mess, you have had Benjamin's portion, the silver cup put into the sack's mouth; riches and God too; estate and Christ too; peace, and the God of peace too; the world, and a good title to it; and yet do not you seldom cry out, *Bless the Lord, O my soul! and let all that is within thee praise his holy name?* How seldom do you consider who hath maintained you all this while? who hath delivered you, and pulled you as brands out of the fire? You have had the sentence of death in yourselves; you have been with David and Paul in the mouth of the lion, and yet saved; near to perish by the bullet, sword, pestilence, fever, and other dangers, and yet your *lives given you for a prey*: But how soon have you forgotten the wonders shewn unto the dead? O the many preventing mercies that you have been made partakers of! Hath not God secured you

in many travails ? How many have died much younger than you, while the Lord lengtheneth out your days in order to repentance ? How many have died in an instant, and been snatched away without any warning given of death's approach ; while you have had many an harbinger, to give you to understand its nearness to you ? How many have been crushed by falls from houses, and devoured by beasts, and by other accidents have been hastened to their long home ; whilst God is long-suffering to you ? How many have you seen drawn on sledges, led to shameful and violent deaths, while you have been kept from such dismal ends ? And are there no thanks due to the name of God ? And yet how seldom do you admire at distinguishing providence, and preventing loving-kindnesses ? You have a guard of angels to attend you day and night, to secure you from danger ; but how little do you bless the Lord for the heavenly host ? And yet if you do thank God for some signal outward mercies, perhaps for ease from the stone, gout, cholic ; perhaps for security from the rage of the devouring pestilence : if you thank not God more for deliverance from hell, from the guilt and power of sin, than for outward salvations, you discredit God, and his choicest mercies, by under-rating spirituals to temporals.

We should have blessed God for his rod, as well as for his staff, for both are mercies ; but how unthankful are we even for sufferings for righteousness sake ? God expects that *in every thing we give thanks* ; as we should not be partial in our obedience, so neither in our thanksgiving. How little have we imitated the ancient Christians, whose mouths were always full of "Thanks be unto God ?" They saluted one another with *Deo gratias* ; and when they heard

tidings of persecution or protection, of crosses or comforts, still they cried out "God be thanked." How unlike are we to famous Bradford? "If (said he) the queen will release me, I will thank her; if she will keep me in prison, I will thank her; if she will burn me I will thank her." Thou shouldest say from thy very heart, "Though sick, though scorned, though threatened, though *all the day long counted as a sheep for the slaughter*; yet blessed be God that I am *counted worthy* to suffer for his name: Blessed be God, that he *counts me for a son*, and *chasteneth me for my profit that I may be made partaker of his holiness*: Blessed be God, that I am chastened, that I may not be condemned." But how few *give thanks always, in all things unto God*? We have been too backward to glorify God in Zion, much more in the fires. The apostle Peter would not have *any man suffering as a Christian*, to be *ashamed*; but to *glorify God on this behalf*, and to rejoice, inasmuch as he is *partaker of Christ's sufferings*. But God knows how far from praises we have been, when the storms have been high, and threatened our tabernacles.

How hath God charged us to remember mercy, and to praise him for it? *Ye that fear the Lord, praise him. Praise him, O ye servants of the Lord! Praise thy God, O Zion! Praise him in the heights! Praise God in his sanctuary! Praise him for his mighty acts! Praise him according to his excellent greatness.* Doth not the innumerableness of God's requirements of praise and thanksgiving, aggravate our neglect of this duty? What provision hath Christ made against this sin? Hath not he appointed the sacrament of his supper, on purpose to help us to remember him, and his saving benefits? *Do this in remembrance of me.* But have not many pro-

fessors been so resolved to be unthankful, that they have neglected this great ordinance, which was appointed to strengthen their remembrance of past mercies? Hath not God told us, that he hath formed us for his praise? And what, yet backward thereunto? We can never love God to an height, while we forget his loving-kindnesses. I wonder not, that many complain of their decays of love to God, while they forget his wonders of grace and love to their souls. Even publicans will love those of whom they are beloved. And did we oftener recount the mercies of God, they would work endearments betwixt God and our souls: Did we consider, what a wonder it is, that God should draw us out of nothing; that he, who stoops to *behold the things of heaven*, should put his finger to our workmanship; that he should curiously work us, as needle work, in the dark vaults of nature; and that when we were fuller of sin, than the toad of poison, that yet he should feed a toad, and clothe a cockatrice: the fire of love to God would burn within our breasts. How is God provoked by this sin?

God took it ill at the hands of the Israelites, that they *remembered not his hand, nor the day in which he delivered them*: How much more do we grieve the Lord, who remember not the goodness and salvation of the Lord in Canaan, yea in Zion? Our Saviour was grieved, that his disciples *remembered not the five loaves, and the seven loaves, and how many baskets they took up*: innumerable greater favours hath God shewed to us, and yet we forget them. How have we forgot the God that bridled nature's proud waves, and said, *Hitherto ye shall go and no farther?* When we were ripe for judgment, then mercy stept in, and yet how slow to give thanks? Hardly one of ten blesseth God for cleansing

mercy, as they ought. *Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?* This makes me fear, people have not had a deep sense of the misery and stains of nature, for that their Saviour is no more thanked. "Did not the Lord force thee, by an over-powering work of grace upon thy soul at first conversion, to be willing to be made happy? Did not he *compel thee to come into the feast?* Was it not God that brought thee to such a parish, to such a minister, and to such a text? And did not he, by his almighty power, enable thee to believe and apply? Was it not he that broke thine heart, when *as hard as a nethermost millstone?* and made it soft, malleable and pliant to his will and pleasure? And what, forget the wonders of the Lord in the deep! This vexeth the Lord to the heart. Did not he cause the walls of Jericho to fall, as by the voice of *rams'-horns*, by weak, inconsiderable means? Did not he alienate thine heart from lusts, that were dearer to thee than thine eyes? Did not he present the face of Christ as lovely to thy soul, who before was *despised and rejected?* And hath not Christ fed thee with fresh supplies of free-grace, that have watered thy soul every moment, so that you have been *kept through his mighty power?* How many doubts hath Christ answered, and how many scruples hath he, by his Holy Spirit, satisfied thee in? And yet, O wretched heart! how unthankful hast thou been? *Thou hast forgot all his benefits!*

A man would think it were impossible, that every displeasing providence should make us so forgetful of all the mighty works that have been done within doors upon our souls. How just is it with God to plague us, for this our unkindness unto him? *Because thou hast forgotten, &c. therefore the harvest shall be an heap.* In the

beginning all succeeded well, (saith Vatablus upon the place) according to our desire : *in the day the plant grew, and in the morning the seed flourished* ; but because of unthankfulness, extreme misery followed. Wonder not, that the showers are withheld ; that the Lord causeth the sun to set on the prophets at noon day ;—that the manna falls not before your doors ;—that the *hidden manna*, and *white stone*, are denied you ;—you have been unthankful, you have *not taken care for the fragments that nothing be lost*. God's mercies have been lost upon you. Our waters were become wines, our gleanings were better than the world's vintage : God dealt with us as sons. But now, if he draws in his hand, and *make his garden as a desolate wilderness* for this sin, who can say unto God, *What dost thou ?* Must not all of us put our mouths in the dust ? Did not we sit under our own vines ? Had we not our solemn assemblies ? Did not we *go in troops to the house of the Lord* ? Was not holiness in credit ? Did not the mixed multitude join with us, and desired to be numbered amongst us because God was with us ? Did not *fear come upon all the people ? And had not the churches rest ?* Did we fear the shaking of the spear ? Might we not have been as holy as we pleased ? Had not we as much liberty as we desired ? But O then how unthankful were we ? How troubled were we, that every Mordecai did not bow ; that every one would not be of our mind, and dance after our pipe ? God knows what a controversy there is with the land, for the unthankfulness of them that dwelt therein. O how glad would ye be *of one of the days of the Son of man* ; of your old privileges, and spiritual liberties ? Because you have not served God with joy and praise in the days of plenty,

therefore it is but a righteous thing, that you serve in scarcity and famine of bread, of the word of the Lord.

CHAP. XIII.

Professors' Neglect of Prayer, especially of secret Prayer.

VI. **N**EGLECT of prayer is another part of ungodliness, too common even among professors, Request and thanksgiving are (saith one) like the double motion of the lungs, by which they suck in, and breathe out the air again. In the petitionary part of prayer, we desire either the bestowing of some good thing, or the preventing or removing of some evil from ourselves, or the inflicting of some evil on God's implacable enemies: and in the gratulatory part of prayer, we return the praise of glory, of what we have received from God unto God. Though the thanksgiving part of prayer be most, yet the petitionary part of prayer is too much neglected. It is ungodliness to go about any business, or journey, to fix our abode, to use any creature, food, or physic, without asking God's leave or blessing in prayer: yea, it is a branch of atheism; this child of irreligion is laid at the door of atheism by the psalmist. (Psal. xiv. 1, 3, 4.) Is it not a lamentation, and should it not be for a lamentation, that so many professors should be guilty of such ungodliness?

Are there not many, who never prayed in all their lives? Professors are looked upon by the world as praying people; but O! how is the world mistaken in many of them? *Thou hast not*

called upon me O Jacob ! Though Jacob was a people severed into a church state, with an aim at God's praise, yet Jacob prayed not ; this was grievous unto God. Do not many professors clearly evidence, that they are prayerless souls, by their disobedience to the preceptive, their impatience under the providential will of God ? By their distrust of the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of God ? *She obeyed not the voice : she received not correction : she trusted not in the Lord : she drew not near to her God.* By their entering into so many temptations ? *Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation.* By their being deceived, and labouring to deceive others in the things of God ? *The pastors have become brutish and have not sought the Lord.* By their backslidings and apostacies ? *And them that are turned back from the Lord, and those that have not sought the Lord.*

Doth not this sin speak our high contempt of God ? That God is not entertained, so much as in a thought ? *He will not seek God : God is not in all his thoughts.* That the thoughts of God are blasphemous ? What profit should we have, if we pray unto him ? Yea, Doth not this sin speak out the hearts denial of God ? What saith the psalmist ? *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God :* he calls not upon God. To live without prayer, is to be dead while alive ; for it is to live without God. The families that *know not God*, and that *call not on his name*, are the same. What ! will ye not do so much as pray unto God ? What can you do less for God, than by this homage, to own him for your Maker ? Or less for your own souls, than to beg their lives of him, whose hand of justice is lifted up against them ? *Their souls (and theirs only) shall live, that seek the Lord.* No malefactors

die more unlamented, than those, that when cast, will not beg for their lives.

How many also are there that have cast off prayer? How many have restrained prayer? And that, both when they have thought they have prayed themselves out of affliction, they have no more to say to God, till under affliction again; and when they have for some time prayed for deliverance to no purpose. *This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?* This is worse, than not to pray at all. Not to pray at all denotes only the neglect of duty; but to cast off prayer, a distaste of duty. But I shall be more particular.

Though prayer be the only key, to unlock the storehouses and treasuries of all blessings: yet how little hath this key been used? I shall wave public and private, and only instance in secret prayer, and that both sudden, and composed, and solemn. How few professors have made conscience of ejaculatory prayer? How seldom have we darted up our souls to heaven, upon sudden emergent occasions, in some short desires? As when we are hearing, "Lord set home this word upon my heart." When in prayer our hearts are melting, &c. "Lord suffer not my heart any more to be hardened from thy fear." When we are about our worldly employments, "Lord, keep my heart with thyself," &c. Are not some of us wholly unacquainted with this kind of praying? "Not such a dart (saith one) to be found in all their quiver." They know not how in the midst of their worldly businesses, and company, yea, in the midst of their solemn religious duties, in hearing, reading, conferring, praying, &c. to send their thoughts to give God a visit, though a short one, in a desire or two, to speak at least one or two heart-words unto him. Have not most professors too much contented

themselves with their solemn visits of God, but between their solemn duties have scarce ever conversed with God? What account shall we be able to give of our thoughts (the first-born of our souls) from morning to evening? Is not this the highest improvement of them, to send in embassies unto heaven, and by them to converse with God? Do not the best of us find strangeness apt to grow between God and our souls, between our set duties? And may we not impute that strangeness to our omission of these more transient and occasional talkings with God? How many precious things, in Christian conference, in sermons, in our solemn joint prayers, are lost, for want of present lifting up our hearts to God, for his presence therein, and blessing thereupon? How many blessed motions of the Holy Spirit, suggested to us in our particular callings, are quenched, for want of these short sallies of our souls to heaven, for more grace, that these sparks may be kept alive, yea, blown into a flame? Neglect of this kind of prayer is no small provocation: it grieves God: there is much unkindness in it that God should be so gracious, as to let his door stand wide open at all times, and that he should assure us of welcome, whenever we come to him, and yet that we should not be so kind, as to step in to visit him, with a desire, hour after hour; and that, though we may thus visit him, and not neglect (but rather further) any business we have in hand, and without being uncivil to any company in which we are. He cannot but take this unkindly.

How few professors have made conscience of closet-prayer? Though Christ takes it for granted, that his disciples will thus pray, and hath annexed a sweet promise to the due performance of this duty, *When thou prayest, enter into thy*

closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Retire thyself; get thee a place, set thyself a time, wherein thou mayest *vacare Deo*, that is, be at leisure to make it thy business to pray to God, &c. Yet how is this duty wholly omitted by some, and too, too seldom performed by others? Satan prevails with some (otherwise honest souls) to put off this duty from time to time, by telling them, either that they will but play the hypocrites therein; or that the time is not convenient, by reason either of some bodily, or of some soul distempers; or that this and the other worldly business must of necessity be dispatched at such a time, &c. O how little do such love the Lord, that are afraid to talk too secretly, or too often in secret with him! But alas! how many omit closet-prayer altogether? Some content themselves with praying with others, either in the church, or in the family: How can such look upon themselves as saints, whatever profession they make? What! a saint, and yet never desire any privacy between God and thy soul? a saint, and yet find no errand to invite thee to speak with God alone? Sure thou rather seekest to approve thyself to men than to God. Thou mayest for a time be the world's saint, but God will at last un-case thee, and present thee before the eyes of all the world for an hypocrite.

The true lover delights to visit his friend when he may find him alone: like that good man, who, when the set time for his closet prayer was come, would break from any company he was in, with this handsome speech, "I have a friend that stays for me; farewell." Others put off this duty, by pretending they pray always, every hour they are darting up ejaculations to heaven

As the pretence of every day-sabbath (saith one) comes just to no sabbath; so the continual praying of some carnal professors, is not praying at all. Ejaculatory prayer should not hinder, but rather fit for solemn set praying. Fire must be kept upon the altar continually, but that must not hinder the morning and evening sacrifice. True Christians cannot be satisfied with a bit and away, but they must have their set meals. Others look at closet-prayer to be at the best but a free-will offering (as they term it) which they may offer, if they will, but will not own it a duty: Surely such are little sensible of their heart-plagues, or else they would alone, *one by one make prayers and supplications*. Such either have not the Spirit at all, or else but little, very little of the Spirit, or else they would be praying apart. In all my observation, the ruins of Christians have begun in their closet neglects, either by omitting the duty totally, or by careless, formal, customary management of it. "The truth is, (saith a late neat writer) this is the first step towards apostacy: backsliders grow first out of acquaintance with God in secret; then delight in this duty declineth by little and little;—then are they less frequent in their visits, upon which followeth a casting off the duty, and yet they may appear great sticklers, and zealots in public ordinances; but if they recover not what they have lost in their secret trade, they will ere long break here also."

No surer sign of a hypocrite, than to neglect secret prayer, it turns thee into a Nebuchadnezzar, a beast, *They are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord*. Thou pretendest a love to God, didst thou love him, thou wouldst love to be with him, yea; lovers covet to be alone, where they may more freely impart their mutual

affections ; perhaps in thy family religious worship of God by prayer is (yet) kept up, to keep up thy credit with men, that thou mayest not be thought an atheist, that thou mayest be trusted ; an hundred things may keep thee, and hold thee to public duties, but herein is the trial of thy uprightness, what thou dost in secret for God, and with him : when the master's part (the two great ones, God and world) then is the trial of thee, whose servant thou art ; but oh ! when the master is alone, then he is mostly neglected.

When alone thou art fittest for this duty of calling upon God ; when the world is shut out, then thou hast a discharge from the cumbers of the earth : a heathen (Scipio) will tell thee ; “ I have never better company, than when I have no company ; for then can I freely entertain my own thoughts, and converse with all the learned that have been in former ages.” But thou art called to greater honour, to improve thy solitude, to converse with God, when alone to have thy Father with thee.

Yea, God, like a modest lover, communicates most of his affections, to his people, when they are in secret : when David was *in the night-watches, then his soul was filled with marrow and fatness*, not that he wanted God's presence in the day, for *seven times a day he praised God* ; but his day-sacrifices yielded him not that marrow and sweetness, which he tasted in the night, when he was sequestered from all company and business. O ! the *hidden manna* is the sweetest. *The church leaneth on the breast of Christ in the wilderness, and there he speaks to her heart.* Unhappy soul ! innumerable are thy losses, by neglecting Christ's calls, *Come my beloved, let us go forth into the fields, there will I give thee my loves* :—That God should so lovingly invite

thee, to take a turn or two with him every day, in order to his opening his breast to thee, and yet be denied ?

Again : when alone, and not with God, thou art liable to Satan's foulest temptations, to atheism, discontent, or pride of heart : when the devil finds the *house empty*, he will furnish you with company enough, *seven other worse spirits*, if worse may be ; you shall be employed. Fear a rape at least, if God be not engaged to be a little sanctuary in thy closet and retirements : Satan frequents the high-ways, and that robber takes men aside into a corner, and then pillageth them of their treasure : he thought so to have dealt with Christ, and therefore takes him into a *mountain alone* : When alone your dangers are greatest, therefore should your cries to heaven be most vehement.

How few professors have observed the fittest time for secret prayer ? God would have us in this sense, *watch unto prayer* : God would have us early to tell the world whose servants we are, and that we dare not undertake any business, without first engaging God with us ; that we dare not enter on Satan's territories, without Christ, our great champion with us : This post should be sent to heaven in the beginning of the day ; for no sooner in the morning, do we begin to live, and stir, but we need fresh succours and auxiliaries from heaven.

The true Christian counts that the sweetest air he breathes in, which is the fruit of prayer ; and all things relish well with him, that run through this golden pipe of prayer ; and therefore he is up early in his closet, that he may receive all, this way, from the Lord's bounty, and faithfulness : No sooner, therefore, doth he open his eyes, but he opens his heart to God ; and

before he puts on his apparel, he must to heaven in secret ejaculations; at least, before he goes to his closet, to pour out his soul more plentifully before God: he expecteth no good day, unless it be begun with a good duty: and therefore *my voice shalt thou hear in the morning, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee: David prevented the dawning of the morning; nay, he prevented God, (i. e.) his providences and favours which he expected, he loved to have them in the channel of prayer.*

But alas! how do professors shuffle with God, by deferring and deferring? And hereby many mischiefs attend.

The world, that pest of souls and graces, is admitted before we have got our antidotes against the infection of it: hence deadness of heart ensues, multitudes of worldly distractions, so that after a few hours, the soul hath no mind to speak with God: but though it must to the closet, yet there is it pestered with wandering thoughts, discontented thoughts, worldly thoughts; so that the time which should be spent in pure communion with God, is taken up in driving these fowls from the sacrifice.

Besides, God is an holy God, and jealous for his name, and he esteemeth it a reflection on him, to be so neglected, that he must be served last of all, and therefore withholds his influences from the soul, to condemn such abuses of his great name; and then no wonder if thou be soon overcome with a world of vain impertinent cogitations. By neglect of early going into your closets, you credit the world too much, as if it were more worthy of your time and strength, than the Lord is: whereas you should profess, that all your hours are God's, and therefore you dare not but *honour him with the first fruits of all your increase*; you will thereby

sanctify all the harvest, all the vintage, by presenting God with the green ears.

By neglect of your mornings, you hint to other observers, as if you were not, *first to seek God and his kingdom, and the righteousness thereof.*

You neglect the fittest season, for then the mercies of the night are freshest, smell sweetest, which after a while, like flowers, will lose their scent with us : while the iron is hot, it is our wisdom to strike ; *His mercies are renewed every morning*, so should our praises.

By entering on business without calling on God, you declare, you need not the Lord's assistances, and that you depend not on him for every thing, but can make a shift to live without him : whereas God feeds us from hand to mouth, and hath not left any stores with us, that we may make our applications to him night and day, who must water us every moment. Poor souls, did you but see your dangers, by reason of the three great brigades of enemies, the world, the flesh, the devil, you would not be so fool-hardy, to venture abroad, until you have besought God, to help poor, needy, indigent creatures : remember you want as soon as you wake, and those things you want, are such as none but a God can supply you : you need divine power to follow your callings.

By neglecting this season, the devil, and the world, have often made you forget, or omit the duty for the day : you have no leisure in the morning, and what then, the devil fills thy hand with unexpected business, thus the excuse grows stronger, and more plausible ; but must we slave, and neglect the Lord of glory ?

By omitting this hour, you are the more unfit for family-worship : were the instrument tuned before, it would be the fitter to play in concert.

But oh ! what hazards dost thou run, not only by preferring other things and business before God, but by neglecting the first hour of the day, when thou art not sure of a second ? Thou purposest such an hour to pray, but what is thy life save a vapour, which may expire before that hour ?

CHAP. XIV.

The Miscarriages of praying Professors about Prayer.

VII. **T**HERE is not only ungodliness in not praying (prayerless souls worshipping God no more than beasts, an ox, or an ass, &c.) but in praying amiss. And O ! how many ways do professors fail in and about this duty, both before and in, and after ?

First, How do professors fail before their entrance upon this duty of prayer ?

1. By neglect of meditation : Few can say, *consider my meditation*. Have not we rushed upon this duty, before we have meditated on the God we were approaching to ? What an holy God he is, and how unworthy we are to take his name into our mouths ? What a consuming fire he is, and what dry stubble we are ?

Have not we rushed into God's presence, as the horse rusheth into the battle ?

Have we considered that his eyes are piercing as flames of fire ? That *all things are naked and open* (as it were dissected) before him, *with whom we have to do* ? We have not set God before our eyes : neither have we believed, that he

is as certainly an observer of us, as we are with ourselves. Our thoughts would not be so low, so earthly, so distracted, did we believingly consider into whose presence we are coming.

Have we considered God's omnipotence That *he can do more for us, than we can ask or think?* He that cometh to God (in prayer) should believe that God is, that he is the strength of Israel, that what we are to beg of God, pardon of sin, victories over our lusts, &c. are mercies beyond the creature's power to reach forth to us ; but *the Lord's arm is not shortened that he cannot help.*

Have we meditated on God's bounty, pity, and tender compassions? As one more ready to give than we to ask ; as one who *giveth liberally*, and *upbraids not* with our oft coming? We want vast thoughts of the great goodness and mercy of God : we have base beggarly thoughts of God, as if we should trespass too much upon him, and weary him by coming too oft to his door.

Have we mused upon the faithfulness of God? Who is under engagements to relieve us, to ease us, to be found of us, when we seek him with our whole hearts. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.*

Have we meditated of the way, by whom we must come to God? How daring are souls to venture on an absolute God? How is the new and consecrated way neglected? How is Christ laid by, as if there were no need of a mediator, of *an advocate with the Father?* How seldom do we pass through Golgotha, to the heavenly Jerusalem ; and see that *none can come to the Father, but by the Son?* We see not our need of incense and odours to be mingled with our sacrifices ; little do we consider that the opportunity

of speaking with God is the price of blood, of the precious blood of the Son of God.

Have we meditated of our sins, of those to which we are by nature and custom mostly addicted ; and of those with which we have since the last duty polluted our souls ? From the want of meditation hereof, ariseth formality in duties ; the heart is not humbled in confession, neither is the soul importunate with the Lord for pardon and victory.

Have we made conscience to meditate upon our wants, what graces we mostly need, what we are most defective in ? From this neglect we pray as if we did not pray, without zeal, earnestness and importunity : whereas had we viewed our wants of God, of his grace, Spirit, protection, mercy and presence, we should pray as for life ; and those straggling vain thoughts would hereby have been suppressed. When the malefactor is begging his life at the bar, his soul is not running adrift after every feather, but he minds his business ; it is life, and his life that is endangered, and therefore he gathers up all possible arguments, that may induce the judge to abate of the rigour of justice towards him. But how oft have we been on our knees, and have been ignorant of what ails us, so that we might truly say, we knew not what to ask ? When you go to your markets, you consider what you and yours want : but do we so, when we go to our spiritual markets ?

Have not we neglected to meditate on the mercies of God, which we have received ? Hence we come either customarily before God, or not with holy boldness, as we should. One mercy opens a door to another : *The valley of Achor* was given as *a door of hope* to Israel : forgetting the returns of prayer, makes our hearts ache, and knees faint. We should book the passages of

God's grace, how *he remembered us in our low condition*, how he hath visited us day by day; when we have come in as the parched ground, we have found God a dew to us, and springs of water have appeared in the wilderness: when we have come in before God with our shackles on our feet, with irons that have entered our souls, God hath made it a jubilee, he hath *proclaimed the acceptable year*, he hath *let us out of the prison-house*, and hath *set our feet in a large place*: when we have come in before God with guilt on our souls, and with fearful expectations, how hath God given us the white stone, and sent us away with his blessing; and with gladness of heart? The neglect of our diaries of the providences and mercies of God; the want of reflecting on all the rings that God hath sent us, makes us more like slaves than children. Do we with David cry out, *Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works, which thou hast done, and thy thoughts, which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.*

Have not we neglected to meditate on the great and wonderful things, that have been done upon the prayers of God's people? We should have in everlasting remembrance what a powerful engine prayer is. It hath *held the hands of the Almighty*: Jacob and Moses prevailed over God: It hath been a key to open and shut the heavens; *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly, that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth, by the space of three years and six months; and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.* And O what wonderful things hath God promised to a praying-

people? *Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. Whatsoever ye ask in my name, &c.* Here is more than Herod offered, that was but *half the kingdom*; here is a *whatsoever*. Did we appear before God with these instances of grace, and promises, fresh in our thoughts, we should not say, *What a weariness is it?* Or that there is no profit in serving God; and gallop through our duties as we are wont.

2. Another neglect before prayer, is, the not stirring up our graces, before we set upon the duty. We too much rest on habitual preparation, whereas actual is necessary. He that leaps immediately from the shop to the throne of grace, and labours not to quicken his dull soul, and to leave worldly businesses behind him, (as Abraham his servants when he goeth to sacrifice) no wonder if he lose the duty, and provoke the Lord, rather than be accepted with him. The well is seldom so full, but that you may, nay, you must throw in a little, to fetch up the more. It is thought, by the redoubling of David's charge (that he found not his heart in a good frame, for the exalting of God, and therefore cries out so vehemently, *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name: bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*

Secondly. How have we failed when we have entered upon the duty? And that in invocation, in confession, in petition, and in thanksgiving?

1. In our invocations. We call God Father, and yet how unlike are we to him. we resemble not him we call Father: we reverence not him we call Father: we trust not to him with that confidence we would, to receive of our fathers of the flesh: we fear, when we ask bread, he will give us a stone: we have lower thoughts of

God's bowels, than of our own: we think ourselves more pitiful, better-natured than God himself: if I were a mother, and my child in distress, I should deny him nothing.

2. In our confessions of sin. We are not full, and free, and ingenuous: we sit with Rachel upon some idols: we do not *declare our ways unto him*, but rather cover our transgressions as Adam. Few can clear themselves as Job did. You will perhaps confess, *We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep: We have left undone, &c.* but still in generals. David was in this gravelled, *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long.* But you descend not to particulars, or if to particulars, yet the Benjamin is reserved, loath to let Benjamin go, loath to confess envy, pride, breach of vows, want of love to saints, loving the rich only, neglecting the poor. You will confess what every man knows you are guilty of, or what every man is addicted to; but you shame not yourselves, by instancing in the particular neglects and commissions, by which you chiefly provoke the Lord: the Agags are not brought to execution, the best of the cattle are kept back, one wedge is hid in the tent. Or if you confess most particularly, yet it is without hatred of the sins confessed: you confess sin, yet hug it, bosom it, plead for it, within one quarter of an hour: you confess sin, but without self-abhorrence: you loath it not, as the plague of your hearts. *I abhor myself*, saith Job: This implies a dislike, an hatred, an indignation against, an utter alienation from, and an opposition against sin. God knows how little of this is mixed with the confessions of most professors.

3. In their petitions? Both matter, and manner, and end? Have not we been faulty in the matter? Have they been always for the best

things? Life, liberty, estate, &c. are desired; but grace, victory over pride, passions, worldliness, &c. lie unsought for. We fail also, when we pray simply that we may not suffer; for there is no foundation in the promise for such a prayer, and we may not pray, save for what God hath promised.

Have not we failed in the manner? Have we always prayed with earnestness, humility, faith, sincerity, &c. Hath the whole man been employed? Few can say, as David, *but I prayer*. He was all prayer: or all of David, or in David, was herein employed. Few can say, *With my whole heart have I intreated thy favour*. Alas! few pray effectually. The heart and soul is not at work in the duty. It is *the effectual fervent prayer that avails*. We pray as if we had a mind God should deny us. We are too much like children, scribbling over a piece of paper, which when they have done, lay it aside, or break it, or think no more of it. We have not continued in prayer: we have not backed our prayers with prayers, re-inforced them: we have soon fainted: we have not been the right seed of Jacob, *I will not let thee go, until thou bless me*: we soon faint, and our desires expire.

Have not we failed in the end? May I not say as the apostle James, *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts*. Hath not our level been too low? We should have made God's glory our end, and we have made self, to quiet conscience to obtain pardon of sin, rather than purity of heart and life; *They assemble for corn and wine*. You have been perhaps earnest for the pardon of your own and England's sins, and yet selfish in all: you fear, (and well you may) temporal plagues, you are afraid that Sodom's sins may bring down fire and brimstone and therefore for your own sakes, rather than God's, you pray.

and with some vehemency ; but your end is still too low. Never do you pray aright, till you pray more *for Christ's sake than for your own* : for his glory, rather than for your own present, future, temporal, or eternal advantages. It is one thing to seek ourselves, and another thing to seek God in a duty. They that pretended so highly ; begin to expostulate with God, *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not, and takest no knowledge ?* Men's lusts pray, rather than their graces. Pride and self-love indite the petitions. You have been suckling your lusts, whilst seemingly devout. *You make provision for the flesh*, whilst about spiritual work, and whilst your inward man seems to be exercised.

4. In our thanksgivings. Who is free from guilt in the gratulatory part of prayer ? Some bless God for justification, sanctification, adoption, &c. and are strangers to these privileges, yea, if catechised know not what these mercies are, no more than parrots know what they prattle : others if, like the lepers they are cleansed, yet return not to bless the Lord : they are large in petitions, but very sparing in their praises. Unthankful beggars are an abomination to God and man. We should be thankful for the least mercy ; but though we have had the honour to be admitted into the presence chambers as favourites (an honour not vouchsafed to the most of mankind) yet we are sullen, and slow to return praises for so great a vouchsafement : You have not come to dry breasts, you are every day full of mercy ; but alas ! *you render not according to what you have received*, therefore *wrath is against you*. Hast thou had no meltings in prayer, no enlargements, no desires to fear the Lord, no importunities, no wrestlings ? Why yet it is mercy, that thou livest upon the patience and bounty of God : it is much that thou

shouldest have a being, and be preserved to this day : it is a wonder he should feed thee, clothe thee, protect thee, strive with thee, suffer thee, who art but dust and ashes, to speak with him. The last night thou mightest have lain on a bed of fire, or by the hedge, or have been in the great deeps ; but alas ! few so ready to praise as to pray. We are too much like the vagabonds, when we have what we come for, away we go, and come no more till pinching necessity drives us : yea, we too oft aggravate our miseries, and over-look the benefits we enjoy, that are mixed with our crosses.

Thirdly. How have we, when our prayers have been ended, failed of our duties toward God, by running instantly from the throne of grace to the world, if not to our lusts ? Not considering how our hearts were in time of duty ; whether straitened or enlarged ; whether composed, or distracted ; whether we had the face of God toward us, or his face veiled, whether we were lively, or lifeless : dead-hearted or quickened ; serious, or slight ; what faith was stirring, what repentance exercised ? The church and people of God observed their hardness in duty : *Why hast thou hardened our hearts from thy fear ?* We should look back upon our prayers, that we may be humbled for all our vain thoughts, untowardness, distractions, and unbelief in the duty : and we should do it, then, whilst we are in the highest capacity to know the miscarriages of the soul, what the aggravating circumstances thereof are, &c. And not only in order to humiliation, but reformation, that for the future we may not dare to touch the mount of God's presence with such beastly fumes.

In case we were in a good frame in the duty, Did we labour to retain the influences of the

ordinance upon our hearts ? Did not we let the fire go out again ? Have not we, like some in a great sweat, gone into the open air too soon, and took a cold ? That is dangerous. David was more careful to maintain his fresh and lively frames, and therefore he entreateth the Lord to keep the same in his servant's heart for ever.

How have we been faulty, in not believing that our prayers shall be answered ? We direct our prayer unto God, but we do not look up, till God look down, as David. We do not hearken what *God the Lord will speak*. Paul observed how long the Lord was silent to his prayer, *For this I besought the Lord thrice*, and yet no answer. O ! when shall we resolve with Habakkuk, *to stand upon our watch, and look and see what he will say to us ?* The neglect of this hath bred so many formalists in our congregations. After we have put our prayers into God's hands, we never mind them more. We would be angry with beggars, if they begged an alms, and away presently as careless of answers.

The sincerity of thy heart would be more evidenced, if thou didst consider what returns thou hast that thou mayest bless God for them, and improve them for God, and in case of denials, to be of a *troubled spirit* as Hannah was, for that her prayer for a child was so long denied.

What mournings hast thou because thy pride, worldliness, unbelief, hardness of heart, &c. are not yet pardoned and subdued ? Poor creature, thou continuest in the road of duty, but observest not whether God hears thee, or not, Saul went beyond thee. He observed, and was troubled, *that God answered him not by Urim, nor yet by prophets*. Have not we by carelessness, by returning to our vomits and mires, intercepted our own prayers ?

Have not we torn our own petitions, and snatched them out of God's hands? *Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear?*

How seldom have we taken Bernard's advice in his gloss upon, *Let us lift up our hearts without hands*, that is (saith he) let us pray and endeavour. We love to employ God to subdue our sins, &c. But we sit idle, we hate taking pains ; we are not *co-workers with God*. I may say unto you, as Christ, *I go away, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins. The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity : because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them. Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them, he will even hide his face from them, at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.* Prayer is a key to open heaven to believers ; but it may be so managed as to open hell to thee.

CHAP. XV.

Professors slight the Written Word of God, especially in not reading, and meditating on it in a proper Manner.

VIII. **S**LIGHTING of the written word of God is another piece of ungodliness, of which English professors have been very guilty. There is not a surer sign of despising any person, than the setting light by what he saith unto us ; for,

according to the honour we give unto the speaker, the words spoken will be of weight with us. But alas ! how hath the Bible, God's written word, been undervalued by us ?

How little have we credited God's written word ? And yet it is natural for us to believe whatever is said by one, of whose truth we are confident. Have not scripture affirmations been doubted of by us ? How little hath our knowledge of them been attended with building a Christian life upon them as a foundation : Have we believed that scripture commands come from God, and are most just and fit for him to lay upon us ? Hath this belief brought forth obedience ? Have we believed that scripture threats are God's threats, and will therefore be performed to every impenitent sinner ? And hath this belief kept us from sin or promoted repentance ? Have scripture promises been believed to be God's promises, and that therefore all the absolute ones shall certainly be performed to the elect, and all the conditional ones, to those that perform the conditions ? And hath this belief stirred us up, and helped us to perform the conditions ?

God hath magnified his word above all his name ; but so have not we. We are apt to be afraid of the appearances of the great God in his extraordinary works in the world ; but who trembleth at the appearances of God in the scriptures ? And yet God appears more in the glory of his majesty therein, than in all his other works, whether of creation, or of common providence. God maketh more account of his written word than of heaven and earth : he had rather lose heaven and earth than *one iota or tittle of his word*.

But have not we accounted it no great matter to swerve a little from the written word of God ?

Yea, have not we made a light matter of leaving undone what is therein required, and of doing what is therein forbidden? Were the Scriptures high in our esteem, did we look upon God's testimonies as wonderful things, our very souls would be in keeping them? *Thy testimonies are are wonderful, therefore doth my soul keep them.*

Have not we accounted them fools that have preferred the word before whatsoever hath been near and dear unto them in this world? Have not we accounted them more nice than wise, who have been *slain for the word*, who have lost name, liberty, livelihood, friends, relations, yea life itself, and endured all torments and tortures, rather than they would offend the written word of God in any one thing, either by omission or commission?

God hath written to us the great things of his law (or word) but have they not been accounted a strange thing, a thing that we should have got little good, if we had obeyed them, and little hurt by disobeying them? Have not we used the word as a stranger, only for our own ends, to serve our own turns, as we have had advantage thereby?

Have not we made the word a stalking-horse for our own carnal designs? Have not we pretended very great zeal for the word, when all the while we have been zealous for self, either our own opinions and persuasions, or our own honour and greatness, or our own livelihood? Have not we, like boatmen, looked one way, and rowed another cried, The word of the Lord; but meant the other thing? Have not even scripture doctrines ebbed and flowed upon political considerations?

How seldom have we discoursed with others scripturally? The scholar is upon every occasion discoursing of those notions which he

prizeth ; but hath not our speech bewrayed our low esteems of the word ?

Have not we been willingly and contentedly ignorant of scripture discoveries ? So is not the scholar of those notions which he affects and valueth. Have not our hearts cried out many times unto the Bible, *depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of God's ways*, either as to worship or manners, and that because knowledge is an obligation, yea, a provocation to duty, and a sting in case duty be neglected ?

Those things which we prize we search into ; but how little have we *sought the scriptures*, as diggers in mines do search for gold and silver in the earth, as the word signifieth ? And this leads me to those two main evidences of our slighting the written word of God, our not reading, and not meditating upon it, as we ought, which I shall a little enlarge upon.

How have we been guilty of not reading the scriptures as we ought ? That every one ought to read them, is so evident, that there is no way for the papists to keep men from believing this truth, but by keeping of them from reading the scripture. No business can discharge any from this duty, and yet how is this evident duty neglected ? Some have not been so far wrought upon, as from some sense of their own ignorance and blindness in the things that concern their everlasting welfare, and from conviction, that they can know such things only by the help of the written word of God, to take up firm resolutions to undertake the study of the Scripture ?

Others notwithstanding their resolutions never set upon the reading of the Bible over. They have seen no excellency in this book : they have seen more in a piece of philosophy, in a rational discourse of divinity, in an ingenious history, in a political discourse, yea, in a ro-

mance, or in a play, like Politian, who preferred an ode in Pindar before all David's psalms.

How many read the Bible too seldom, thinking it too much to read it daily, to spend one hour therein every day? Have not some spent several hours in a day in reading some good books of men's inditing, but not a quarter of an hour in reading God's book? "I even hate mine own works (said Luther) and oft-times wish they were burnt; because I fear lest they should withdraw men from reading the Scriptures.

How much greater is the number of those, that have not read the Bible aright? Are not all of us in this number; When have we prepared for the reading of the Scriptures, as becomes those that are going in unto God (so going into the sanctuary, where the word of God is kept, is termed).

Have not we read fearlessly? When we were going to take the Bible into our hands, have *we trembled at the word of God*? lest we should not sanctify the name of God, yea, lest we should take the name of God in vain in our reading?

Have not we read heedlessly? Not diligently marking the duties commanded, the sins forbidden, the rewards promised, and the punishments threatened therein? Have not our thoughts been wandering and not fixed upon what we read? When did we attend to Scripture words, as heedfully, as Benhadad's messengers did to the words of Ahab?

Have not we read unbelievingly? Not believing that the Scripture is the word of God, that whatever we read therein is true and good; that the Spirit of God, the inditer of every word in this book, did particularly intend our good in every verse; that, in the Scripture, life and death are set before us; yea, that scripture words are our life?

Have not we read out of custom, and not conscientiously, in obedience to the command of God?

Have not we read for wrong ends? Either to satisfy our curiosity, and not regulate our hearts and lives: or to have matter of discourse, but not matter of practice; to have scripture at our tongue's-end, not at our hearts: or only to know, being ashamed to be ignorant of those things, which all Christians know; and to be able to say nothing of such matters, which we cannot but have occasion divers times in company to talk of, but not to do? When did we read the Scriptures with this particular intention, that they might be *a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths*? That we might thereby be helped to order our conversation aright? When did we read the Bible with the same attention, reverence and resolutions to follow every rule therein; as we think we would (if we had lived when Christ was upon earth) received a letter from him directing us what to believe and do, that we might be saved? Or as we think we should a book writ immediately by the finger of God, as he wrote the ten commandments in two tables? Why, the Bible is God's letter to every one of us in particular, written by himself, though mediately: *I have written to him the great things of my law*: To him, it is in the singular number, because to every man and woman particularly. When did we read the Bible as children read the last will and testament of their deceased friends?

Have not we read the scripture without begging of God his Spirit, to help us to understand what we read, and to practise what we understand; at least not so importunately, as we would, if we had been begging for our lives, at the bar of a judge? Have not we sown this seed

among thorns, in unploughed hearts, and have not so much as prayed to God, to take away the heart of stone, and to give an heart of flesh, a teachable, pliable, tractable spirit, ready to receive every divine impression? O! when shall we make conscience of reading the scriptures daily as we ought? "The Emperor of Heaven (saith Gregory the Great) the Lord of angels and men hath sent to you, that which concerns your life, and will you (still) neglect to read it with a fervent and zealous spirit?"

How guilty have we been in not meditating in the word of God as we ought? How little, if at all, have we dwelt in our serious thoughts upon the matters contained in the written word of God, to the end we might understand how much they do concern us, and that our hearts may thereby be raised to some holy affections and resolutions? Though meditation be commanded as a chief means sanctified by God for the keeping of his word; though we cannot be holy and happy without it altogether; though it be one of the most profitable duties of a Christian: the reader and studier of scripture may see the beauty, and smell the sweetness of the flowers that grow in this divine garden; but it is the Mediator, the Christian-bee, that gathers the honey out of them; though it be the duty by which the soul digesteth truths, and draweth forth their strength for its nourishment and refreshment; yea, the duty by which all other duties are improved; yet how much is this duty neglected by all sorts of professors, because though it be the most delightful task to the spirit, yet it is the most tedious to the flesh, that ever men on earth were employed in.

Have not many been long professors, and yet if they would tell all the truth, they will confess they never spent one hour together in meditating

on the most weighty scripture-truths, on God, on man's estate by creation, degeneration, regeneration, glorification, on Christ, on the vanity of the creature, on the beauty of holiness, on death, on judgment, on heaven and hell. "Meditation (saith Mr. Baxter, in his 'Saints' Rest') is confessed to be a duty by all, but by constant neglect denied by most: and I know not by what fatal customary security it comes to pass, that) men, that are very tender-conscienced toward most other duties, yet do as easily overslip this, as if they knew it not to be a duty at all: they that are presently troubled in mind, if they omit a sermon, a fast, a prayer in public or private, yet were never troubled that they omitted meditation, (perhaps all their lifetime unto this very day.)"

How few have managed this duty aright? Hath not that which we call meditation been study only? Hath not some controversial point, or some nice speculation been the matter of our meditation? Hereby we evidence that we have not so great spiritual hunger after righteousness, as we should: Hungry men (saith one) do not use to stand and pick bones, when they have meat enough to eat. Hath not our end in meditating been only the increasing of our knowledge, and not the improving of our knowledge? Have not we begun this work without God? When we were going about to meditate, have not we neglected prayer for help from heaven to go through with the work; though without God we can neither know, resolve upon, nor perform what is good; for from him, yea, from his own good pleasure comes both the will and the deed? Have not we idled away our meditating seasons? If we have sequestered ourselves from worldly businesses, and company, for meditation at any time, have not we idled away that time,

by suffering our thoughts to gad and wander up and down to no purpose, to be sure not to fetch in considerations for the stamping holy impressions upon our hearts and lives? Have not we in meditating been without a due sense of God's presence? May not we cry out, *sure the Lord was in such and such a place* where I have been meditating, *and I knew it not*, i. e. I considered it not. Hath not the work of our understandings in this business been to retain, and not to convey truth into the heart? Have not our understandings represented what should work holy affections and resolutions aright? Have they presented things good, of a divine and heavenly nature as God, Christ, heaven, &c. in their prime and beauty? Have they presented things in their nature simply evil, as sin, God's wrath, hell, at their worst? Have not we left off meditating before we attained the end of meditation? before holy affections and resolutions are wrought? Have not we rushed out of this duty as well as rushed into it. Have not we gone from this work, as a bird out of the snare, with joy and speed? Have not we ended as well as begun this work without God? not praying to God for strength to perform, what we have been enabled by grace to resolve upon for God; and for pardon of what hath been amiss in the duty? O! when will English professors be prevailed with to make conscience of this duty of duties? "I once more intreat thee (to use Mr. Baxter's words) as thou art a man that maketh conscience of a revealed duty, and that darest not wilfully resist the Spirit, as thou valu'st the high delights of a saint, and the soul-ravishing exercise of heavenly contemplation, and as thou art faithful to the peace and prosperity of thy own soul, that thou speedily and diligently set upon this great duty."

O! what a mighty blessing is it to have such

a book, wherein are written by God himself the great counsels of his will concerning man's eternal salvation? What a sin is it then to have low, mean, yea vile and base thoughts of it? Is not our slighting of the word of the Lord the cause of all the wickedness in our hearts and lives? Whence are all our omissions and commissions, but because we make a light matter of sinning against the scriptures? Certainly this great provocation hath a great hand in our miseries and threateneth utter ruin to us. *Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flames consumeth the chaff; so their root shall be rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*

CHAP. XVI.

The Miscarriages of Professors respecting the Promises.

IX. MUCH ungodliness is also evidenced in professors' miscarriages about the promises of the word. The promises are the great promoters of godliness in the world, not only as arguments to induce it, by shewing how God will reward it; but, likewise as principles of godliness, or the chief instrument, whereby God makes souls partakers of the Divine nature.

1. How little do we believe the truth of the promises? How little do we believe that the Spirit of God and glory rests on them, that suffer for Christ and his gospel? and that as tri-

bulations do abound for Christ, so shall consolations by him ; or that we shall have an hundred fold advantages by any loss we sustain for Christ and his concernments ? All that fear of man, all that cowardice, all those tremblings of heart, that are upon professors this day ; all that enmity against the cross of Christ, which appears on the faces and hearts of men, are clear demonstrations how little the promises for the bearing up under suffering, for the deliverance out of suffering, or rewarding of suffering for Christ are believed : we cannot set the promises against all crosses.

2. How low is our esteem of the promises of God, of the great and faithful God, in comparison of what they are concerning the promises of honest and sufficient men ? I appeal to thee, if a king should promise thee a thousand pounds per annum, whether it would not more rejoice thine heart, than the promises of eternal life, which God hath made unto thee do ? With how few professors are the promises of God exceeding great and precious ?

3. How little do we admire at God's stooping so low, as to oblige himself by promise to such worthless persons as we ? God might have dealt with us by way of absolute sovereignty and dominion, imposing only upon us commands to do our duty, without annexing any promise of a reward, he being our creator, and we his creatures. It is his great condescension, to deal with us by way of promise, which is not only an insinuation and signification of what he will do, but a laying a bond or obligation upon himself to do so and so. Herein God did more condescend unto man, than unto the fallen angels : they have not any one, not the least promise of any good, made by God unto them. And yet how little are we in admiration ?

4. How little do we bless the Lord for those jewels, that are wrapped up in the promises : for the fruit, that hangs on this tree of life ? *This is the promise, that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* A crown is promised : *He shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.* A kingdom is promised : *Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him ?* Yet how unthankful ? This doubtless proceeds from our diffidence of the reality and faithfulness of the promiser, and therefore that shall be another question.

5. How little do we rely upon God, to make good his promises ? How many think God the promiser as changeable as themselves ? Men in boats, being in constant motion upon the waters, are apt to fancy that the land and trees move, as they themselves do : so many Christians think, as oft as they fail in point of strict duty, God will fail too. Who lays all the stress upon the faithfulness of him that hath promised ? Do not we lean partly to the promises, and partly to our own endeavours, and the means we use, and so divide our dependencies between the promises of God, and our own duties, to bring in pardon, peace, holiness, or any outward comforts ?

6. Do not we view promises without beholding Christ : Do not we doat on the bracelets, but neglect the friend ? Do not some set a greater value on the promise, than on Christ's person : though the promises are only *the crystal streams of that river of life, which proceedeth out of the throne of God, and the Lamb ;* yet do not we make them the primary, and not the secondary object of faith ? Who look upon pro-

mises only as instruments, to bring Christ and the soul together?

7. How little do we hope for the good laid up in the promises? What fearful expectations have many professors, though they *walk close with God*, though they *abstain from that which is evil*, though they *fulfil after God* to the utmost of their power, though they design which way to *walk in all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good word and work*: yet how cast down, how discouraged are they? how do they pine away, and their hearts die within them? how are they as reeds shaken, as ships driven, and cannot *cast anchor within the veil*? Moses himself was shaken, when a deliverance of God's own promising met with opposition: *And Moses said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil intreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh, to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people, neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.* It is God's wonted course, to bring signal mercies, under a sentence of death, before we enjoy them: and yet how prevailing is unbelief, when God defers, and the promise is obstructed? How faint are we? Our hope is not lively.

8. How little do we wait, till that good which is in the promises, be given out to us? I may truly say to many, yea, to most, *Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye may receive the promise.* Sure, *The vision is for an appointed time*, and God would have us to *wait, though it tarry*; because *it will not tarry* beyond the time, appointed by the wise and faithful God: but, though God never fail of his own time, yet he seldom comes at ours, and then we run into unbelief, if not impatience of spirit. How oft do we antedate the promise, and set it a time before God's time? *Patience* hath not

its perfect work, so that if God save us out of our miseries, we shall not be able to say as the church, *Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us : This is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.* This limiting the Holy One of Israel, either as to means, (when we tie up the Lord to work by ways and causes of our own) or to days and hours of our own bold and impudent prescription, is no small provocation. *How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness ; and grieve him in the desert ! Yea, they turned back, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.* Some will wait a month or two for the promise of pardon, that they may have peace in their consciences, and for promises of outwards ; but when they see nothing comes of their waiting, then *there is no hope* ; why should I wait on the Lord any longer ? That wretch waited a little, but not long enough. We allow time to the physician to cure us, we yield, that he knows the fittest time to apply cordials ; but we yield not so much to God : we would have the smarting plaister pulled off, before the wound be healed ; whereas it is best for us, to have it kept on. David's foot was almost slipped, when he saw the promise of the kingdom deferred, he makes a bad inference from the delay, *One day I shall fall by the hand of Saul.* We do not stay ourselves on the promises, till the thing promised be given into our bosoms. David waited patiently ; but so do not we : our hearts are not at rest, but we stagger like drunkards, we reel this way, and that way, but are not established and settled : *In this we are not confident, that God who hath promised cannot lie* ; and therefore will perform the word, that is gone forth from an unfeigned lip. We are too hasty in our desires, whereas God knows the fittest

season for the promise to bring forth : we shall have it when the time is come ; but we hasten the birth and spoil the conception. The prophet of old complains of some, that they were of an hasty heart : whereas *he that believeth maketh not haste*. God defers, to put an edge on our desires, a value on what is promised, and to exercise our faith. The word that is gone forth out of the mouth of the God of truth, should quiet ; but it doth not. *I the Lord will hasten it in its time. The Lord will arise, and have mercy upon Zion, when the time to favour her, yea, when the set time is come.* And is not God's time the best ?

9. How have many abused, rather than applied promises ? How many dogs take the children's bread ? How many hypocrites taste of the forbidden fruit ? Lay hold on that which doth not belong unto them ? When they read those sweet delicious promises of the pardon of sin, of the love of God, of the freeness of grace, of the glory to come, they count them as theirs, whereas they are but usurpers, they set their mark on another's goods : they are thieves and robbers : for they are *strangers to the promises*. How many abuse the mercy of God in the promises, so that even the promises become an occasion of stumbling, whilst they continue in sin, in hopes of pardons through the promises ? We are not led by the sweetness of the promise to repentance ; but rather harden our hearts, presuming of pardons on course from the God of grace : gluttons surfeit soonest upon the greatest dainties ; thus many venture to continue to *sin that grace may abound* : hence repentance is put off ; because men hope God will *abundantly pardon*, whenever the *wicked forsakes his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts*. The promises are not made a sanctuary unto which men

fly from sin, but as a sanctuary to protect them in their sinful courses. *God is merciful, slow to wrath*, he will *abundantly pardon*, &c. therefore, &c. Do not we overlook all the threatenings and terrible denunciations of God against our sins, and wholly pitch on the comfortable promises of the gospel? Do not we eye promises, and yet hate commands? Do not we mind temporal promises, with the neglect of spiritual, and therein disparage God, by setting a deeper value on earth, than on heaven, on our back and bellies, than on God? Do not we eye the promises that speak of mercy; but pass over those that lead to duty? View with pleasure pardoning promises; but neglect the promises of sprinkling us with clean water, and that sin shall not have dominion over us? We like it, that God will be our God; but we love not to be God's people, under his command, and at his dispose. How do we eye the absolute promises, but neglect the conditional? We take hold of promises of deliverance, when under any misery; but we forget the condition: *If my people shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways*, &c. little is that minded by us, which the prophet speaks, *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then will I repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them*. We love, we like, promised mercies, and every one is looked upon as an unbelieving Thomas, that doubts of the mercy, but we overlook the preparatory duties of fasting, praying, repenting, and reforming our hearts and ways, &c. Hence men doat almost on the promises of grace; but secretly hate the promises to grace; because they find no gracious qualifications in themselves: they love to hear of God's readi-

ness to pardon : but they are loath to hear that they must come to Christ for repentance and then for remission, they would fain have the penny, but they cannot endure labour. God hath linked his promises and our seeking together. *Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them* ; but how many of us do either altogether neglect, or slothfully go about to perform the condition of the promise ? Are not some of us altogether strangers to faith, the condition of the whole covenant of grace ? know not what an heart purifying faith means ? We never gave ourselves unto the Lord, yet run away with the promises of forgiveness ; though ignorant of the Mediator between God and sinful creatures, though full of pride and high conceits of our own righteousness, though we live in an open disesteem of the gospel of Christ, though we cannot but find an incomppliance of heart with subjection to Christ, yet we boast Abraham is our father, the blessing of Abraham is come upon us, the promises are ours. How do the promises of God make some slothful in the use of appointed means ? How formal in duties are we ? May it not be said of us, as of the image, there is somewhat wanting within ? Are not we silly doves without heart ? Are not we only bolstered up with the promises ? O these pillows under our heads make us slumbering virgins : All is well, God is merciful, &c. but we do not sweat and get our living by labour, we *strive not to enter in at the straight gate*, &c. We look for the blessed hope, but we live not soberly. *I know* (saith God) *the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace, but not of evil, to give you an expected end* : but be sure, that ye call upon me, and go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

10. How nice and curious are some in the application of promises? They forsooth take no pleasure in any promises, but such as they think no hand touched before their own: they neglect the plain, clear, open, rich, promises of the gospel; and if any be more abstruse; and hard to be found out, by an ordinary eye; they are greedily sucked in: they are only or mainly for mystical promises. Such think they are delighted with the goodness of the promise; whereas they are only pleased with the newness of it, or with their own invention, and that they can see farther into a millstone than another. I have known some of these, and I have seen what is become of them: their pride and affectation hath led them also from the plain paths of holiness.

11. How many will not close with a promise (such is their folly) till the thing promised be found within them? Because their hearts are so corrupt; therefore they will not apply the promises of subduing iniquity, and of purifying the heart: whereas there is no way to get their corrupt hearts cleansed, but by laying hold on such promises; and the longer they keep off the promise, the worse it will be with them. There is no other way, but by this ark, to escape drowning: and the longer they wander in this wilderness, the more hard it will be at last to enter into Canaan? The longer they keep off from the promise, the more corrupt will their hearts grow, and the more corrupt they grow, the work of the heart-purifying-faith will be the more difficult.

12. How many of us regard providences more than promises? and make the providences, rather than the promises of God, the ground of their faith? One saith well, "The starlight of

one single promise, is of more use to Christians, than a constellation of many providences, both to assure them in their ways, and to support them under any difficulties."

13. Do not we pretend to eye the promises, and yet use indirect means to bring our devices to pass? We have pretended to live the life of faith; but God knows what shifts men have had, and wicked (at least questionable) courses men have taken; how much evil hath been done, that good may come. Have not we, to help God's promises to bring forth, turned out of God's way, resisted dignities, offered violence to known laws, wronged conscience, forgot all obligations upon us, regarded nothing that stood in our way of compassing our designs?

14. How little do we examine the fruits of God's promises in our own souls? The exceeding great and precious promises are given, that we might *be partakers of that divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*: that we might *purify ourselves, even as God is pure*: but do we look for these ends to be attained by the promises in our souls? Do we look not only for a change from looseness to civility; but a thorough sanctification in body, mind, and spirit? Alas! which of us can say, *Having these promises, we do cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and are perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

CHAP. XVII.

Professors' Abuse of Providence.

X. **A**BUSE of Providence is another branch of ungodliness, too much spreading among professors. God is to be honoured, not only as the chiefest good, and as the supreme truth and authority; but as the first Cause, that giveth being to all things, and therefore ordereth and disposeth of all things as he pleaseth, having absolute dominion over all events: but O! how is God dishonoured, by abusing his providence? The blind world are not only guilty, who do not acknowledge God at the other end of causes, as swaying all things by his wisdom and power, but set up an idol, called Chance; but even professors, eminent professors, are herein very guilty.

1. How seldom do we observe God's providence? The finger of God is in all the creatures; not only we but all creatures *live, move, and have their being*, from God, and *in God*. The whole course of nature moves, as it is turned by the hand of God, and directed by his counsel: it is not with the work of God as with the artificer's clock, which, put into a frame, and hung with weights will go, though the artificer be at a distance from it; but, though God set all the creatures in frame, yet the motion of every wheel depends on God. There is not a drop of rain falls, *till God utter his voice, and cause the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth*: Yet how is God not minded? *We see not his footsteps*: We may say in this, *He passeth this way, and that, and we see him not*. Our eyes are held

to secondary causes : we look when the wind, or moon, will change ; but we are so short-sighted that we reach not God. How seldom do we consider, that though God's providence doth deliver up his choicest friends, into the hands of his and their enemies, yet doth it not deliver them up unto their will : they cannot do what they please, but only what pleaseth God : Such as are God's own are still *engraven on the palms of his hands*, though turned over into the hands of the ungodly : they are God's favourites still, though the wicked say, *persecute them, and take them, for God hath forsaken them*. How little do we mind, that *our times are in God's hands* ; and that as Satan is in a chain, so are his instruments : we fear men more than God. O, when shall we hear that word of God, *Say not a confederacy to all them to whom the people shall say a confederacy ; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid : Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread : And he shall be for a sanctuary, &c.*

2. How little are we affected with the continual course of providence, though it guards and keeps us every moment ? The stars in their courses would fight against us : the sea would swallow us up, and break in as a devourer : the beasts of the field would arm against us ; if God did not check them, and bound them : yea, one man would eat up another, were it not for the Lord, who sets bounds to the rage of all the creatures. It is the eye of jealousy that is still wakeful for us : it is the Lord, that *puts the hook into the nose*, and the bridle in the lips of the Sennacheribs of the world ; and yet how little are our hearts affected ? how little are they comforted and borne up ? how little do they cleave unto the Lord ?

On the contrary: how distrustful are we of God's providence, in a time of seen dangers, though we are wonderfully delivered from invisible ones every day? Who can number the legions of devils? so many deliverances hast thou by God's providence every moment; and yet how diffident and doubtful are we, upon all new imminent outward dangers? How little do we believe, that God will bring in good to us, by such providences as are ungrateful to sense, to flesh and blood? Though nothing is more usual, than for God to take away some comforts, and lay in better comforts; to take away an Abel, and make it up in Seth; to deprive Noah of the comforts of the whole world for a while, and then to wash it from its filthiness, and to deliver him the possession of it, with manifest proofs of his singular distinguishing care of him and his family, whilst all the rest of the creatures perished in the waters: to deprive Mary and Martha of their brother Lazarus, and to return him from the dead unto them with great advantage: to deprive Job of his children and estate, to make his last days better than his first, and to give him *twice as much as he had before*; for *seven thousand* sheep, he had *fourteen thousand*; before he had *three thousand* camels, afterwards *six thousand*; before *five hundred* asses, then *one thousand*; yet how little can we trust providence in such cases? How hardly were the disciples persuaded, that the absence of their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, should be supplied in the Spirit? And yet saith Christ, *Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him to you.* Christ in his Spirit, dwelling in our hearts, is better than Christ in flesh, dwelling in our houses. When the unclean spirit

departs from a man, and returns again, he brings seven spirits worse than himself, and the latter end of that man is worse than his beginning ; but when Christ withdrew from earth to heaven, he brings seven consolations better than at first, in the pouring forth of the Comforter, and the end of such (in whom the Spirit supplies the want of Christ's bodily presence) is better than the beginning. Why criest thou for thine affliction ? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity, &c. Therefore all they that devour thee, shall be devoured, &c. for I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord, because they called thee an outcast, &c.

Nothing is more usual with God than to make the loss of one comfort, the means of enjoying another with advantage, yea, with the advantage of the hundred fold : but alas ! most fear they shall be losers by Christ and for Christ. God doth as mariner's, row one way, and look another : he brings most of his great ends about by looking quite aside from what he hath a special intent to bring to pass ; the Lord seldom proceeds in a direct way to his ends, i. e. in a right way to our apprehensions, in such a way as we would have him to go in ; but he leads us about as he did Israel, and yet that was the right way indeed : though the means seem to oppose the end ; yet he works to the praise of his name ; he can write aright by a crooked pen, and bring honey out of the carcass of the lion : make use of strange instruments, break down Jericho's walls by the sounds of rams'-horns ; but O ! how little do we trust Providence when the means are not probable to effect our expected end ? Who believes *there shall be light in the evening ? And that Sarah shall have a posterity as the stars in the firmament for multitude, and as the sand*

on the sea shore, which is innumerable, when she was old, had been barren so long, and her lord old also? Who will think that *the sun and the stars should bow to Joseph*, when he lies in the pit, or is in the dungeon of the heathen king? How slow to believe were the disciples, when Christ is dead and buried, and lies three days in the grave? *We thought this should have been he that should have delivered Israel*. How little doth the worm Jacob (Jacob when reduced as low as the earth, when creeping into holes for security, when as contemptible as a worm, that no man scruples to tread upon, when so easily to be destroyed as a worm) believe, that yet *the worm Jacob shall thrash the mountains and fan them, and the wind shall carry them away*? Alas! how unseemly is the behaviour of many, if providence thwarts them in taking away a child, an husband, an estate, how discouraged and cast down are we, as if God in his providence had pulled down that, which he could never build again, or rooted up that which he never could plant again. O! how few believe that if God pull down their brick houses, that he will build them again of hewn stone, and that if he consume their fir-trees, he will build again with cedars? Do not many afflicted Christians think it impossible for their sorrow to be turned into joy?

Whence is all our dejectedness under cross providences, but from our not believing that all things are disposed by the wise and gracious providence of God? We believe not enough that *the eyes of our loving Father run to and fro throughout the earth, to shew himself marvellous for our help* in a time of need and danger. David was thus overtaken, till he schooled himself into a better frame, with *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me?*

Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. Few can say, *God is our refuge and strength: a very present help in trouble.* Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed: and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Few believe, that if the Lord be pleased to lay a great burden upon their shoulders, he will give great strength to bear it, and if he gives but little strength, he will surely proportion the burden to it. Whence are all our uproars of spirit, and disquietness of heart, but from our not trusting upon Providence? When God is working desolation, did we see it his work we would be still. David was so, when strangely provoked by Shimei's insolency and railings. *God had bid Shimei curse.* Abishai was not so much concerned in the affront, as David, but he sees not God in the lips of Shimei, and therefore his spirit is inflamed.

All the boilings of revenge that are in the hearts of men one against another may be attributed to man's blindness and injudicious view of things, they see not the wicked to be God's sword to let out their corruption: they do not believe that God intends to pursue gracious designs by such instruments. Joseph was easily conquered and persuaded to forgive the unkindness, yea, the cruelty of his brethren in making merchandise of him to the Ishmaelites: he could say, *It was not you that sent me hither, but God, &c.* *As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive.* He insinuates to them, that they had no cause to fear his revenging himself on them; for that he could easily pardon that offence of theirs, out of which God hath drawn so much good to his people and so much glory to his own name. How silent would we be, yea, how full of praises,

if by an eye of faith we did see the end of God in all his providences, that they lead to holiness. *Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I keep thy word: I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou hast afflicted me in faithfulness. He for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.* Can we be displeased with the physician for prescribing a diet, or bitter pills and potions, if he provides these for the purging away diseases, that threaten our ruin? Shall we fly in the face of him that binds us, in order to the saving of us? and yet what murmurings have we, whilst in the hands of the physician? *The folly of a man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord.* How should we honour God, if we did believe, that in his hand our breath is?

How careful are we to please them that have power over our lives, and to whom we are beholden for every breath we breathe? O! study how much you labour to comply with men, and how little with the Lord, and you will find your distrust of Providence, that you do not believe, that *God sitteth upon the floods.*

3. How oft have we made providence an argument to justify our actions and states? That, because God doth not punish us, but tolerate us; therefore he loves us, and approves of our way? Whereas the scripture and experience shew, that *there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongs his life in his wickedness.* The Lord sometimes puts his swine into the fattest pastures, in order to the slaughter, yea, sometimes his not punishing, is the greatest punishment. *I will not punish your daughters for their whoredoms:* God lets adulterers and adulteresses to prosper and thrive. Jerome observes, that God deals with us, as parents with children, whilst

there is any hope of reclaiming them, they are corrected ; but otherwise they are let alone, to do as they list , or as physicians continue their applications, whilst there is any hope of the patient's life ; otherwise they let them alone. How do some bless themselves, that they never fasted and prayed as others, and yet they ride on horseback, whilst others foot it out : But what saith Jerome to these ? *Quando videris, &c.* i. e. "When thou seest a sinner flow with wealth, and braving of his power : when thou seest him very healthful, and to have a company of brave children bravely arrayed ; then say, the threatening of God, by the prophet Hosea, is fulfilled upon that man." *Dives had his good things here, and Lazarus evil : Dives fared deliciously every day, his misery is reserved to hereafter, as Lazarus's comforts are reserved till death. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.* i. e. a confluence of all good. What said one of the late English bishops ? "It is the common lot of the true children of God, because they have many out-flyings, wherewith their Holy Father is not well pleased, to come under the scourge oftener than the bastards do. If they do amiss, they must smart for it either here or hereafter : now God meaneth them no *condemnation* hereafter, and therefore he giveth them more *chastening* here." It is a considerable passage of a very learned man, in weakening the late position of some That "God had born testimony to their cause, by the many victories which he had given them," saith he, "This concluding of yours will by the same reason infer that Christianity is not, and that Mahometanism is the true religion, because when the Turks asserted one, and the Greek-church the other, and that difference begat a war between

them ; it is clear that the Turks were successful, and that the Greek-church was sadly wasted and subdued by them, and so remains to this hour in that un-retained captivity."

Do not all things come alike to all ? And yet good men, some of the best that ever breathed, have been stumbled at these dispensations : " Lord (saith the prophet Jeremiah) thou art righteous, yet let me reason with thee, why doth the way of the wicked prosper ? Thou art of purer eyes (saith the prophet Habakkuk) than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity : wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue, when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he ?" The saints also of the New Testament were apt to stumble at the cross, at God's providences towards his saints and favourites, that they should suffer such hard things ; so that the apostles were forced to counsel them : and to rectify their thoughts, in this particular ! *My brethren, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial :* and the apostle Paul sent Timothy on purpose to comfort them, and to establish them, that *no man should be moved by these afflictions :* yea, our Lord himself knowing how apt his disciples were to stumble hereat, preacheth on purpose on this subject. *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye be not offended :* what things were these ? *They shall put you out of the synagogues* (excommunicate you, cast you out like dogs) : *Yea, the time shall come, that whosoever killeth you will think he doth God service.* Good men, when they see the wicked thus walk on every side (go where they please, and do what they please) they are apt, either to doubt of God's providence, whether he governs the world, or to call in question whether they have any relation to God's special care. But do not

we know that the child is often beaten, whilst the servant or stranger is spared ? Do not we know that *judgment begins at the house of God*, yea, and stays long there, and all that while the tents of ungodliness may be free : these may *wash their steps in butter*, and *the rocks may pour them out rivers of oil* : they may *wax old and grow in wealth* ; their seed may be established : the rod of God may not be upon them : they may *rejoice in the sound of the organ*, &c. and yet wicked enough : all this they may have with the curse of God, for *they say unto God, depart*, &c.

4. How oft have the generation of the just been censured for hypocrites and ungodly, merely because of outward providences ? Thus was Job censured by good men ; because he sat on the dunghill, who was wont to sit with princes. Let a man be under grievous losses by sea, or by land, yea, let but a *viper hang upon the hand*, and what then ? *This man* (say they) *surely is a murderer, who though he hath escaped the seas, yet vengeance suffereth not to live*. Men's outward condition is made by barbarians, yea by Christians, the line by which to measure men's relation to God : they interpret love by prosperity, and hatred by adversity ; whereas the Lord tells us that *through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of heaven*. I wonder not at this, when I consider that *the servant is not above the master* : when Christ was a man of sorrows, *they did judge him smitten of God*. How ready also are we to say this is a just judgment of God upon such a suffering professor, for ——— ? Yea we censure ourselves for hypocrites, when God crosseth us in some earthly comforts and designs. If a child dies, &c. then we question the root of the matter, whether there be a spark of grace.

5. The more Providence hath favoured us, have not we the less enrolled ourselves on the covenant of grace? Hath not God had the less of our dependance and faith? Have not the promises lain more neglected, so that God hath been even necessitated to draw in his hand of bounty, that like the widow when destitute, we may trust to him? The cisterns leak apace, that the fountain may be in greater request.

6. How discontented are we unto this day with God's providential administrations toward us? How do we prescribe to God? Some would be richer than they are; others more honourable; some covet to be above others. We have bad memories, or else we cannot but remember how ill some of us improved our talents of power and honour, when we had them. Is it reasonable that God should be charged for an hard Master for not entrusting ten talents in our hands, when we have been so unfaithful to our former allotments? Jeshurun-like we *waxed fat*, and never were more bestial, than when we were in the greenest pastures. God would be charged even with indiscretion, if he should commit ten talents again to thee, till thou art humbled for thy former unfaithfulness.

7. How do we take God's work out of his hands? How careful are we in *many things*, though we should *be careful in nothing*? Though *we cannot add one cubit to our stature* by all our cares; yet what solitudes eat into our hearts, and cut them in twain? We should *serve Providence in the use of means*, but should *have nothing to do with the issues and events* of the means we use, but leave them to God. That which is not under our power, should not be under our care. All things are ordered by the deliberate counsel of God. *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift*

nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them all.

8. How do rotten-hearted hypocrites distaste God, grow careless of serving God, yea, fall into an abhorrence of religion, because of God's frowning upon his people in providential dispensations? Hence innumerable sorts of these hollow-hearted professors, desert their former profession: when the wind and tide of preferment is against them, they will not hazard their outward comforts, for all the promises of the gospel: whilst they see how little Providence favours the saints as to the comforts of this life, and that Providence suits not their desires, they rage and swell, and are ready to cry out like that wretched king, *This evil is of the Lord, wherefore should I wait on the Lord any longer?* Now, farewell to God, farewell to profession: if when *the children ask bread, he gives them stones*, farewell to such a father.

9. How commonly do men neglect the providence of God, and betake themselves to their own expedients, in order to extricate themselves from their miseries? Is man wiser than God? And yet men hope rather to help themselves by their own wits, wiles, and endeavours, than by leaning to the providence of God. Such there were in Jeremiah's time: God had told them that he had brought them into straits on purpose to engage them to repent of their sins, and to turn to the Lord: *Thus saith the Lord, behold I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and doings good; but they loved not humbling work; And they said there is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagi-*

nation of his own evil heart. They had devices of their own, such as God approved not : and have not we (some of us) had such ? Hath there not been devising how to sow discords between superiors and inferiors, between magistrate and people ? Hath there not been *stumbling in our way, from the ancient paths in a way not cast up*, in an untrodden way ? O ! how have men run to extraordinary courses to deliver themselves out of their miseries ? For this God may *make our land desolate, and a perpetual hissing*, or derision : he may justly *scatter us as with an east wind before the enemy, and shew us the back and not the face in the day of our calamity.*

10. Have not we been partial in viewing the providences of God ? Have we not taken some one providence, and fixed our eye upon it so long till our hearts have been ever overwhelmed with sorrow ? But we have not viewed the providences of God in their contexture, nor in their relation to gracious ends for our good : some take more notice of smiling providences than of frowning, of what in providence makes for them, and their courses, than of what makes against them : but others take more notice of frowning providences than of smiling, of what makes against them, than of what makes for them. In this we have shewn ourselves fools ; for *who is wise shall understand these things* : these words are restrictive : Who ? That is few or none are such, and then there is an earnest wish or desire of the prophet, O that men were wise to understand these things : *the ways of the Lord are right*, though men think them not so.

CHAP. XVIII.

The Hypocrisy of Professors.

XI. **H**YPOCRISY is another piece of ungodliness, which like leaven, hath diffused itself through the whole body of professors. It is the greatest ungodliness, that can be, to rob the Lord of his dominion over the conscience, and therefore hypocrisy is called blasphemy. *I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not.* God is not honoured unless he be acknowledged as the supreme authority, not only over the life, but the heart; and therefore his authority is never more undetermined than by a mere *form of godliness*. Hypocrites are *clouds without rain, wells without water, trees without fruit*, though *not without leaves*: yea, (to use Christ's similitude) they are *garnished tombs*: they appear to be one thing, but are another thing: they appear to be the greatest worshippers of God; but are the greatest dishonourers of God: *They profess that they know (worship) God: but in worke they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.* The hypocrite's piety is not piety, his religion is not religion; but doubled and trebled iniquity. Should not this make us to tremble at the greatness of the hypocrisy of this age? O! how many apothecaries' boxes are there, that have golden titles and nothing in them? How many curious pictures drawn to life; but look behind them, and there is nothing but dust and cobweb? How many have glorious signs, but within ill customs: an angel

for a sign, a lamb for a sign, but within are devils and cheats?

How many have taken up religion under pretence of its being a help to heaven, when they have made it a means to get earth, to get custom, credit, &c. Hence when they cannot compass; but rather obstruct their worldly designs, farewell to religion: if it contribute not to their private ends, they give it up again. O! how few have embraced Christ and Truth, for Christ's sake, for Truth's sake? Have not most embraced Christ and his gospel, as they have servants, for what they can do for them? and adhered to the profession as the ivy to the tree, not because it loves it, but sucks from it, and is succoured by it? Have they not always worshipped the rising, and not the declining sun? How few own the declining, sinking cause of Christ? How hard is it to persuade men to stand for truths, that stand not with their advancements and accommodations? Hence many now stand idle, as the people in the market-place, who would not go into the vineyard, till they were hired. How few will own any way to be Christ's, till they see how it stands with their secular advantages? How many neuters now, who once were forward professors? *If we entertain him (say they) the Romans will come and take away our place and nation.* We find the truth of a learned man's assertion; "He that will serve God for the world, will serve the devil for the world: he that serves God for a little, will serve the devil for more: where he can mend his wages, he will give his service." How many professors have with Absalom gone to Hebron to worship, but all the while have promoted their own ambitious designs, raising even sedition in order to their earthly advantages?

In how many hath the tongue prayed, when not the heart? These have been much in fasting and prayer, and have thought themselves much wronged that they were not heard; but God gives them a reason: *Ye shall not fast as ye do, to make your voice to be heard on high.* The hypocrite may lift up his voice strongly, and yet never be heard: his voice for want of the heart therein may never come up to God's dwelling-place: his prayers many times fall back upon his own face, like spittle against the wind. How many have used prayers as an hook to draw in outwards from God and man; but not as a sword to destroy their lusts! How many have cried vehemently unto God for assistances in their duties, chiefly, if not solely, to get themselves a name in the earth? How many tell God with a brazen face that they love him, yea, that they love him with all their hearts, whereas they love not God, but God's, somewhat of God: they flatter God with their lips; they delight not in his presence: yea, all the while they are serving their turn on God? Fain they would partake of God's bounty, of God's protection, and God's pardons, but they love neither God nor his image; when God puts them to express their love by self-denial, then you shall see the graves to be full of rottenness; they hate to spend and to be spent for God. How many tell God that they are troubled for offending him, when they are only troubled that he is displeasing them, and about to correct them for their abuses of him? They will cry out in prayer, O my carelessness! &c. But alas! It is not sin, but the judgments of God, and the consequents of sin that disturb them. How many will tell God twenty times over they are ashamed of their sins, and within one hour after they are not ashamed to commit them again, no more ashamed-

ed are they, than the sow is to lie tumbling in the mire? How will many tell God they fear him, and his judgments, when in deed and in truth they fear neither, witness their frothy loose spirits and conversations? How will they tell God that all the world is but as a drop of a bucket in comparison of his majesty, and that all flesh is contemptible, when weighed with him, and yet they fear the wrath of man more than the wrath of the almighty God? How many will tell God that they are contented with all his will, and yet their hearts are full of inward risings against the providence of God? How many tell God they believe in him, trust to his mercy, depend on Christ, and O! forsooth all their cares are cast on Christ, when God knows, their care and work, like bees, is to get honey to their hives? They *mind earthly things*, and are scraping the dust of the vallies to themselves; as if they thought it their wisdom rather to lean to their own providing, than to be beholden to the Lord and die beggars? How earnest are some in their cries to God for victory over sin; but secretly hate it not? And doth it not appear in this, for that having directed their prayers to the Lord, they do not look up, to see whether the corruption be more mortified, and their love to it abated yea or no?

How have the speeches of many in their converse one with another bewrayed their hypocrisy? How do many covet mightily to insist on the refinements of hypocrites, and thereby they escape (as they hope at least) from being judged such themselves? How have some studied to disgrace sin to the utmost, and yet secretly cherished that, which they laboured to make odious to others? In company they cry down self-love, hypocrisy, formality, earthliness.

and pride, but privately they keep up these, and make them their companions. How zealous have some been in discourse for the Protestant Faith? How have they cried out against errors, and for a reformation; but can tell no more of a work of God upon the heart than an heathen? How have some contended for opinions, and have put a *jus divinum* upon such and such a way, and counted others as little better than Pagans, that would not submit to their way, and yet by fear and flattery have soon faced about.

How will some cry up faith and such for most eminent in grace? and O how do they love them! when all the while self-love acts them, and if they gain not by them, they will surely have an howbeit to blot them? They are as the foreman to praise the rich, from whom they hope to squeeze some of their gold; but bring up the rear, are the last to commend them, from whom they expect nothing of advantage by their glavering tongue. How much hypocrisy hath appeared in our declaiming against others' sins? O! we must not suffer this: the house of God must be kept clean: it must not be made a den of thieves, an hogstye, a cage of uncleanness: and all this while their zeal is nothing but revenge; a secret grudge there is against the delinquent, and now that an advantage offereth, they will have their pennyworth out of him.

How many are always finding faults, blaming magistrates, ministers, all but themselves? This man wants courage, and another wants another grace, whilst they themselves want all grace, as being mere pieces of pageantry. How many whining hypocrites have we, that will in all companies, especially where ministers are, be crying out against the baseness and treachery of

their own hearts, and the wickedness of their own lives, and rest in their lazy complaints, but reform not ?

How severe are some in their censures of sin in others, as Judah against Thamar, she must be burnt ? Who will now suspect Judah to be unclean ? How ready have we been to judge and censure others, rather than ourselves ? To behold a mote in others, but not the beam in ourselves ? How many censure ministers for too seldom preaching in private, and yet are themselves sermon-glutted ; as yet they have not got a stomach, so great was their surfeit with the former plenty ; yea when they have sermons, neglect them ; or if they attend with their bodies on them, yet have no fellowship with Christ in them ? We are just like persons labouring under consumptions ;—apt to be angry, and fret, if we have not our wonted meals, and the cooks are blamed for negligence ; and when the meat is brought before us, we are even weary of the smell of it. How many censure others for being too talkative, and therefore would impose silence on others, because they have neither heart nor tongue to vindicate God, and to promote religion ?

How many are full of persuasions of the love of God, and of the grace of God, and yet ignorant of the first principles of Christianity ; neglecters of family-prayer, or closet-duties ? They think well of themselves, because in their duties before men they are devout and zealous, and carried forth to the wasting of much time ; but in their closets they are straightened, and put the Lord off with a short collect. How many, like your city maids, go in their best, are neat, cleanly, and in gorgeous apparel, when walking in the views of others : but if you follow them home to their houses and chambers, how nasty,

how foul are they ? How many are there whose religion lies in their face, habit, gesture : seem demure, humble, walk with their eyes looking downwards, bow with Absalom to the people, and yet their hearts are full of pride and loftiness ? How oft even on fast-days have you had sour faces, and inwardly light, frothy, and unserious hearts ? As an evidence, observe when the day ends, *the dog returns to his vomit*, the heart becomes vain, or rather, the vanity that was smothered and pent up in the day, breaks out as soon as the duties are over : we can *hang down our heads like a bulrush*, we can roughcast our faces, but it is hardly for a day.

How hath hypocrisy followed thee from the corners of the streets to the very closet ? Thou hast shut thy door, as if thou wouldst shut out world and devils, and there hast fallen asleep, or (which is as bad) hast parlied with the devil, and pampered thy lusts : hypocrisy, like the frogs of Egypt, hath crept into thy most secret retirements.

How few can pretend to uniformity in their obedience ? How many will be ashamed, because they respect not all God's commandments ? still they clip the law : still some reserves : they will let go profaneness, so they may but reserve covetousness : they will pray, hear, &c. so they may cheat their neighbour under a demure behaviour : or they will be strict to the rules of justice and equity amongst men : but they will rob God of his honour : some of them are punctual to a day, to a farthing (blush, Reader, if thou art short of the hypocrite's stature) ; they will not cheat you with a brass shilling : but rob God of his due, of his due in the closet, and in the family too.

How frequently do we hear some desiring to know the least measure of saving grace, and

why? because they would sit down therewith. There is not a surer note of an unsound heart, than to be contented with the least degree of grace, and not to press forward.

How generally do men hate to be examined and tried about their state? This is a sure sign of a rotten heart, of a painted Christian; paint will not endure the fire: hypocrites hate lancing and piercing work. How many continue in a course of religion, and yet their hearts are hardened more and more, and they know it, and yet will hardly consult with ministers about their sad condition? or if they do, yet practise nothing more than before? I am confident there are many who make it their business to keep up their reputation among the saints, but have lost (and know they have) their credit at the throne of grace; and though they have their reward, the saints embrace them for precious, yet Christ neglects them, and when they spread out their hands all the day long to the heavens, they have no welcome with God. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord, I am full of the burnt-offerings of the rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear.*

O! What a controversy hath God with England for its great hypocrisy? We have called ourselves of the holy city, and have *made mention of the God of Israel*, but *not in truth, not in righteousness*. Though you have passed for saints in the account of blind, and short-sighted men; yet you are but devils in Christ's account: so was the arch hypocrite Judas: *One of you is a devil*. Of all devils, none is so bad as the professing devil. Remember the vengeance

which fell on Beishazzar, when he caroused in the bowls of the sanctuary. *Their damnation slumbereth not*, who through covetousness make use of the covering of feigned words. O! When will ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness, and true holiness? Believe it, if thou art a whited wall God will smite thee. Though thou get some present glory or profit by thy outside holiness, yet God more abhors thee, than the imperfectly observing world can applaud thee. Will a king endure it, that thou take his robes and clothe a swine with them? or that thou take his crown and set it on the head of a base varlet? God is coming against the hypocritical nation. And he accounts it a disgrace for thee to voice thyself to be the son of so great a prince, whilst thou art a slave to hellish lusts. All you do for God will not profit you; you lose all you have wrought, while acted by self, and corrupt in your ends and aims. Though you trust in *lying words*, in your outward shows, yet *I will declare thy righteousness, for they shall not profit thee*. What shall I say? There is no acceptance for you to be had without the Benjamin of sincerity with you. A day of trouble is hastening, and you think then to pray, *but will God hear you cry when trouble cometh upon you?* If you deny God your heart, never expect his ear. Quails you may have, but with a vengeance, with *leanness in your souls*. That which God desireth and looketh for, is *truth in the inward parts*. God and religion have received so much dishonour by pretenders to Christ and truth, and so many atheists have been made confirmed, and hardened in England, by the observations they have made on professors' hypocritical pretensions, that I fear the stains will hardly be washed away without blood, and some probably will be called forth to seal to

the truth of Christ by their death, to convince men, that there are some real Christians, who will spend, and be spent for Christ; and that while many have but *a name to live*, yet there are a few in our Sardis, who are not defiled with hellish hypocrisy, but love truth in their inward parts.

CHAP. XIX.

The Sabbath-Sins of Professors.

XII. & *Lastly*. **W**HEN you remember the evil of your ways, of your ungodly ways, you may not omit your sabbath-sins. God hath appointed the sabbath: he hath sanctified it for special and entire communion with himself. The law of the sabbath was given before the fall; because man was to labour and dress the garden on the six days, and therefore could not have that complete and undistracted communion with God, even in his state of innocency, which he might enjoy by a total separation from all earthly and heterogeneous employments: but since the fall, this rest is of more absolute necessity; for that we cannot now apply our minds entirely to matters of so different a nature, as heavenly and earthly things are. The sabbath is many ways honourable: it was antiently set apart by God; it was written with God's own finger in the tables; God rained manna on that day; it is called an *everlasting covenant*, by way of eminency, as if nothing of God's covenant were kept, if this were not: Yea, God puts a *remember* on this day, and no other: *Remember that thou keep*

holy the sabbath-day. “ If a friend sendeth to you, that he will come and solace himself in your company such a day, and tells you the set time, when he will come ; will he not take it ill, if you neglect him then ? If you are full of employments, and other guests, and have no leisure to attend communion with him ? Thus saith God, remember such a time, I will set it apart on purpose to enjoy you, and feast you ; I will then take you into my cellars, my wine-cellars, and (after an holy manner) inebriate you with divine comforts : you are on your other days clogged and cumbered with earthly affairs, so that I can have therein but broken communion with you ; but pray remember to lay aside all other business, to rest from all your other works, that I and you may freely converse together.” But instead of this,

How little preparation do we make for the observing of this day unto the Lord ; though *remember* be a watch-word of solemn preparation for it ? Remember it ; think of it before it come, so that thou mayest be ready to sanctify it, without any distraction by worldly business. Which of us dispatcheth his worldly business seasonably on the six days ? Nay, is it not a wicked custom, to engross more business into our hands and hearts the day before, than on any other day of the week ? Do not greedy professors sit up later on Saturday night, than any other night ? Hereby their hearts are encumbered with the world, and their natural strength and spirits wasted and spent, so that they cannot with a free spirit wait upon God. Such is the reverence that is due to the solemn and public duties of devotion, that they require, not only a ceasing from other works and thoughts, for the time of the performance ; but also a decent preparation beforehand, that we *look to our feet*,

&c. that so our thoughts and affections, which are naturally bent upon the world, and not easily withdrawn from it, may be raised to a disposition becoming the day. God alone knows, how oft the devil, and our own hearts, have entangled us with occasions on the Saturday, whereby our minds have been distracted on the sabbath : yea, have we not at times even secretly wished, that the sabbath were over, or might be adjourned, that we might pursue some worldly design, which is obstructed by its interposal ? The sabbath is the saints' market-day, or fair-day : you know what preparations are made by worldlings for their days of gain ; would to God we had learned wisdom from carnal men, so to fit and prepare for the advantages to our souls we may reap upon God's day.

How have we curtailed the sabbath ? Have not we risen later on the Lord's day than on any other ? and gone sooner to bed on that day than on any other ? *When will the sabbath be gone ?* Do not we make it the shortest day of the week ? O ! if God had reserved all the days to himself save one, how diligent would you have been, to take all the day to your worldly business ? This is a clear evidence, that your minds are more on your profits and pleasures, than on the service of Christ.

How lowering are our countenances, and how heavy are our hearts, in the beginning of a sabbath, much more than upon any other day ? Doth not this prove the day to be no way pleasing to us ? And how cheerful are some of us, when the sabbath is ended ? The heart is not so well pleased all the day, as then : yea do not some cheat and delude themselves hereby, as if they had joy in the Lord, and had received comfort from the word and other ordinances ; whereas they are glad that the yoke of ordinances, the burden of

the word of the Lord, and the burden of the day of the Lord is taking off their shoulders?

How many are there, who would profane God's sabbaths and wholly neglect the ordinances of them, were it not for the laws of men, and the eyes of their relations?

How quieted are some when they have attended the public service? and do they between and after those solemn duties refrain their lips from worldly talk, from impertinencies, from such discourse, as bears no proportion with the holiness of the day?

When works of necessity and charity happen out beyond our expectation or forecast, are we (at all) troubled at them? Do not we rather rejoice, because we have thereby a dispensation to withdraw from the immediate worship of God? And how many neglect to *do all their works on the six days*, though the Lord so expressly chargeth them so to do, that they may have a pretence of necessity to do so much servile work on the sabbath? How common is it to dress meat on the sabbath, more than on any other day, when there is not the least pretence of weakness, &c. Hereby not only servants, but the whole house are too much in labour and distraction, and hindered (if not from the solemn assemblies, yet) from family and closet worship.

How do many gossip, compliment, and feast away (abroad) the day of the Lord? or else eat to an excess at home, and thereby make themselves fitter for a bed, than to wait on the sanctuary, to hear Christ's voice, to meditate on his love, and to feed in his pleasant pastures.

How careful are we to keep ourselves, and ours, from pilfering from our neighbour; but not from stealing from God his time? Yea, are not some governors so ungodly, unmerciful, that

they will allow their people no time but the sabbath to recreate themselves from their labours? If they need recreation, you have more time than God hath reserved, sure you should not steal from God to pleasure them.

In the discharge of the works of mercy to man and beast, do not we respect more our own commodity, than the will of God, than the dispensation of God, and the creatures' necessities? Are these works of mercy attended with such spiritual meditations, as they do afford us, if our hearts were holy?

How few bless God for giving them one day, wherein they may lighten their hearts of all worldly cares, and throw off all griefs and secular encumbrances, and may seek for relief and comfort in their God?

Perhaps the master observes a day unto the Lord; but how careless is he, that his sons and daughters, and all within his gate honour the day of the Lord? Do not many professing governors of families let them sleep away the sabbath, that they may be the fitter for their drudgeries the following week? O! when will governors be as diligent, that their servants and household serve the Lord, as that they serve themselves? You have been careful that your work were done on the week; but careless whether God's work were done by them on the sabbath: careless whether your servants profited by the sabbath yea or no? When will God's glory and the good of your people's souls be nearer to you than your worldly advantages? You ask your servants, what work they have done for you every day, and call them to frequent accounts for your gains sake, and what! never reckon with them about their spiritual soul-work? O how little is the love of God shed abroad in your hearts?

How justly may God be angry with us, till he

hath consumed us, for our defiling the day of the Lord ? It was God's express law, that *every one that defileth it should surely be put to death.* When the people were weary of the sabbath, when they said, *When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn ? and the sabbath that we may set forth wheat, &c.* The Lord swore by the excellency of Jacob, *Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein ? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood, and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day. And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation, &c.* Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea ; and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

CHAP. XX.

The Miscarriages of Professors, respecting Heart Examination.

THE more that the Lord of heaven chargeth us with a duty, the more inexcusable are our neglects of it : there are few things more commanded us, than to try and examine our hearts and lives : *Examine yourselves, &c. Prove yourselves, &c.* We are apt to be strangers to our-

selves, to cheat ourselves with vain presumptuous hopes, to rest in notions ; therefore *Examine yourselves*, take an experimental knowledge of yourselves : we are apt to prove others, and censure them ; therefore *Prove your own selves* ; begin at home, try your state, try your actions, bring the metal to the touchstone, see whether it be sound or counterfeit ; try your faith, whether it be temporary or saving ; prove your repentance, whether it be thorough or superficial ; examine your love, whether it be sincere or hypocritical ; and your obedience, whether it be universal or partial. *Know therefore, and consider it in thine heart*, make a return or answer to thine heart. *Commune with thine own heart*, hold intelligence with it. *Let a man examine himself. Let us search and try our ways.* But yet notwithstanding these injunctions,

1. How many are there that never set about this duty ? They will pray, &c. but will not be persuaded to look inward ? They are as great strangers to their own, as to others hearts. They are at no pains, to try in what state they are : they will not try, whether they are new-born or not ; whether sanctified, or not ; whether a saving change hath passed upon them, or not : they will not compare themselves with the characters, which are given by ministers and books, to see whether they be in the gall of bitterness, or not : in the blood of iniquity, or not : they never examine what justification, and justifying and saving faith be, and whether they are justified, and shall be saved ? like Gallio, *little caring for these things.* They examine which way they may be greater in the world, how to add to the heap, how to load themselves with thick clay, how to escape the wrath of man, how to prolong their days ; but not how to prepare for eternity, and how to make sure of heaven ; you ask one another what

news from navies, from armies, from court, from country ; but when did you spend one hour to ask your hearts this serious question, " O my soul ! what will become of thee when thou leavest this earthly tabernacle ? " We travel any where, but where we should ? We are better read in any book, than in the sealed book of our own hearts : We are not at all for a personal treaty with our own consciences : We are too much prying into other men's hearts, but our eyes turn not inward : We know not how it is with our souls, and what will become of them, and we have no mind to know such matters.

As we commune not with our hearts about our states, so we do not commune with them about our actions, neither before, nor after the doing of them : before we act, we do not advise with our consciences, whether, what we be about to do, be lawful or unlawful : and if lawful, whether expedient or inexpedient : after we have acted, whether our actions be good or evil. How many are contented, so the matter be good, but examine not themselves about the manner, principles, ends, and motives ? Though the children of Israel knew, by the word of the Lord, and from Abraham their father, that Canaan was *a land flowing with milk and honey* ; yet they sent spies and searched it, and thereby were confirmed : if men had never so much confidence of the goodness of their prayers, &c. yet for confirmation sake, they should send down spies into their hearts, to see the clusters of their zeal and affections, the utmost of the goodness of them : but alas ! how many wholly neglect this necessary possible duty ? If all were alike, God might take up his old complaint, *No man cried out, What have I done ?* Or, O my heart ! *What hath God done for thee ?*

2. How backward are a more refined sort of professors to a compliance with this duty? How oft have your ministers invited you, beseeched you to hold intelligence with your own hearts, and yet cannot prevail? How backward are the best to keep a strict eye upon their little house within, to see what is done within those doors? We are apter to study others' lives, yea hearts, than our own. If the best knew, how much work lies within doors, they would not be so much abroad as they are.

3. If we do examine our hearts, yet not by the word of the Lord. God would have us to try and prove ourselves; then there must be some measuring line, some standard, some rule to try ourselves by; but herein we are hugely defective; we try ourselves by some sudden pangs, or by the good opinion of others concerning us, or by the lives of others, (we being in an hospital, where every one almost is lame and defective) or by some other easy rule, that we ourselves frame unto ourselves, and so miserably cheat ourselves. O! how loath are we, that the light of God's word should be let down into the dark cells of our hearts, for want whereof, there is much dust unobserved, and not swept away? How loath to try states or actions by the scripture, though thereby they must be tried at the last day? He is a good text-man, that compares scripture with scripture: and he is a good Christian that compares the scripture and his own heart together, that credits his own heart only, when it hath the consent of the prophets and apostles, making them umpires in the decision of all his soul controversies. Have recourse to *the light that shines in a dark place*: But alas! Who obeys *this form of wholesome words*?

4. How careless and superficial are many in examining themselves by the word? How few

do examine their state, or their actions fully? Though our hearts be very great impostors, *deceitful above all things*, great supplanters, full of guile: though there be thousands and thousands of lusts, that lie hid in our hearts, and deceits like the sands on the sea shore, yet how carelessly do we set upon this work? We take no pains in it.

5. How seldom are we in this work? Some defer it till a sacrament, and then perhaps *the house is searched for the leaven*; whereas we should keep a petty sessions in our hearts every day, and do what we can to know the bottom of the projects, devices, workings of our hearts. 'When going to prayer, we should examine ourselves, whether we have clean hands and pure hearts, whether we are double-minded; if so, there is no drawing nigh to God: and when we come off from the duty, we should confer with our hearts what enlargements, quickenings, meltings, humblings we had in the duty, what promises, what threats were applied by the Spirit, whether we saw the face of our beloved, or not? When going to a sermon, we should examine in what posture we are to meet with God, what oil we want, that we may be supplied? When going to our beds, we should examine our hearts, how the day hath been spent, what sins were committed, what duties, and how discharged, what temptations were resisted, what mercies were received, and what growth and increase of grace we have obtained? When going to visit, this duty should be taken up before and after: *Before*, thus, Wherein may I honour the Lord my God in such company? What are their wants, that I may endeavour to supply them? What are their temptations and discouragements, that I may labour to support them? What are their graces and best attain

ments, that I may profit by them? *After, thus, O my heart ! What good didst thou do or receive in that company ? wast thou eyes to the blind, feet to the lame ? didst thou labour to bring thy friends nearer to Jesus Christ ? or hast thou more estranged and prejudiced them, from and against the way of truth ? O my heart ! Didst thou take heed to thy ways, that thou didst not sin with thy tongue ? Didst thou keep thy mouth as with a bridle ? When going into the shop or field ; yet with Isaac thou art to meditate there, and confer with God and thy heart, thus, O my heart ! for whom dost thou labour, for self, or for God ? whose servant wilt thou be to-day, the world's or Christ's ? O my heart ! How many snares are there in the world ? What a dirty place is the world ? and how great is thy danger, if God prevent, not by special grace ? O my soul ! What need hast thou of almighty power to keep thee, that thou mayest retain thy sweetness in salt waters ?*

But alas ! How seldom do we reflect on our words, or silence ; on our speaking, or hearing ; on our behaviour abroad, or at home ? When do we consider, what our affections were most set upon, in such and such a place, in such an hour ; and what our demeanour God-ward, and toward our neighbour, was ? We do not believe Bernard, who tells us, “ If we would examine ourselves as oft as we need, we must do it always.” And Chrysostome’s paraphrase and counsel on psalm iv. is of as little credit with us ; “ Let this account be kept every day, have a little book in thy conscience, and write therein thy daily transgressions, and when thou liest down on thy bed, bring forth thy book, and take an account of thy sins :”

6. Do not we grow weary of this work, before it be brought to any considerable issue ? We

flag before we come to the upshot. Still *some were learning, and never came to the knowledge of the truth* : and so some (pretend at least to) be always trying, but they hold not fast : they try their hearts, as some did truths, till they be wholly sceptical, as ignorant whether converted, or no, as ever : they know not more this year, than they did seven years since, but hang betwixt heaven and hell, in a dubious state, for want of skill or pains to decide this matter : We are not resolute and peremptory enough to have an account of our souls, yea such an one, as that we may have boldness in the presence of Christ. When *David thought on God, and was troubled*, he never gives over his heart, till he ended this controversy : *He communed with his heart, and made diligent search*. We should commune till we know, whether we be natural or spiritual ; and accordingly be humbled greatly, or greatly rejoice in God our Saviour. But alas ! this age is strangely dull and sluggish : those duties, that will cost expence of spirits, and call for the labour of the mind, we wholly omit or do them very negligently. “ Reader, could I but prevail with thee, to set in good earnest upon occasional meditation, and heart examination, and solemn meditation, and self-trial, I should bless the Lord as long as I breathe for this enterprise of mine. The Searcher of hearts knoweth, that I took pen in hand on this design, to labour with thee in order to inside duties, that thou mightest not be contented with a *form of godliness*, and rest in the external part of religion : that more work might be done within doors, in closets and hearts. O that you would reform ! Not pass on to another chapter, till you have engaged your slippery inconstant hearts, to attend on this necessary duty ! Take a few considerations to impel you.”

1. The very heathen will rise up in judgment to condemn you, if you neglect this duty. A Roman philosopher every night, before he slept, would examine himself thus, *Quod malum hodie sanasti*, &c. What sin hast thou opposed? wherein art thou bettered? Cato, also would daily at evening call to mind, whatever he had seen, read, or done that day. "I use (saith Seneca every evening) to plead my cause with myself: when the candle is gone, and all silent, I review all that I have said or done in the day: I hide nothing from mine own scrutiny: I pass by nothing." Pythagoras gave also this severe rule to his scholars, that "they should no night suffer sleep to seize their senses, till they had three times recalled the accidents and passages of the day, what evil have I committed? what good have I omitted?" *Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees* (saith Christ) (may not I say of the heathen) how can you hope for salvation? O! how hath thine heart cheated thee with vain confidences? How hast thou cried, *the temple of the Lord: I have Abraham to my Father*: whilst moral heathens have been better acquainted with their hearts, than thou art?

Yea, 2. The very sensitive creatures may shame thee into the practice of this duty. Go thou sluggard to all the fowls of heaven. Do they not sit in the sun, and view themselves, look inward to themselves, turn every feather to set it at rights? Do they not look over their feathers, and pick out and throw away that which is bad, and set others in their places, when misplaced.

Nay, 3. You yourselves will be judges of yourselves. You take the glass, and what is amiss in the hair, in the face, in the body, you rectify by it: and what? no observation to be made of

the faces of your souls? O! take the word of God; and make use of this glass, which now is in thine hand: doth it discover no spots, no neglects, no failings? O! view thyself and humble thyself, reflect on thyself, and confer with thyself, till thou art ashamed, till thou abhorrest and loathest thyself before the Lord.

4. You have a sure sign of hypocrisy on you, while this duty lies neglected; for all the upright have been very careful to *commune with their hearts*, to search their hearts, to make diligent search, lest any lust should be covered; as Rachel covered her idols, or as Saul *was hid in the stuff*. Nothing is more desired by a sincere soul, than to be thoroughly searched: *examine me O Lord*, as artificers do whether their gold be weight or no: *and prove me*, as artificers do their silver in the fire: *try my reins and my heart*, the most inward motions of my soul: search me more deeply and thoroughly than the world can do. Unsound hearts have one Delilah, they have one house of Rimmon, that they cannot endure to be examined and found out: they are loath to search too far, lest they should see what they are unwilling to see, and so be put upon judging and condemning themselves for that, which they love beyond an eye, or an hand.

5. O the sad consequences of the neglect of this duty! By this neglect your hearts will become careless, for that they are not called to an account, as servants and factors are wont, when their masters neglect to examine them. Hereby sins will grow bolder with you, and the more easily beset you; for that you examine not wherein their strength lies, and which way they oftenest prevail over you. Hereby the work of repentance will be obstructed; for that innumerable sins which you are daily guilty of, will pass

away unobserved, with those circumstances attending them, which make them of the greater magnitude. Hereby your uncertainties about your spiritual estate will remain : it may be converted, it may be not, it may be a son of God, it may be not, but a child of hell : it may be a believer, it may be an enemy to God, and one of God's curse. Hence will follow great dejectedness under every providence of God : no condition will please you, while doubting and staggering : you will be apt to fear whether your food be in mercy, your days in mercy, your liberty, yea the gospel in mercy to you : you will sink under adversity ; for you cannot say, *the Lord is my portion* ; you know not whether God will be your strong tower, fortress, &c. you cannot manage any duty well, while this lies neglected. How can you *walk before God with an humble heart*, when you know not what your hearts are ? How can you *serve him with an upright heart*, while a stranger to this duty ? The very heathens knew how necessary this was to all their duties, and therefore discreetly caused to be writ over the temple at Delphos, γνῶθι σεαυτὸν, *Know thyself*. Miserable are the disappointments that will attend English professors, unless they fall into a compliance with this duty : you will die deluded : like the foolish virgins, you will not know your undone condition, till it be too late : you lie deceived in matters of the greatest and highest concernment ; you are cheated hitherto in things of eternity : you are vexed when deceived by a friend, when supplanted by a neighbour : O ! how will it pierce your souls, to be cheated by yourselves ? When we would exclaim against a knave, we say, he will cozen his father ; the nearer the relation, the more sordid the cheat : O ! but here is one that lies in thy bosom, and thou and it go to

cheat each other continually. *Let no man deceive himself*; it seems we are apt to do so; but O! how great will your confusion be when this deceit shall be manifested, when you shall see yourselves frustrated of all your hopes, and the glory, your hearts promised you? How will you be confounded, when you shall say "We looked for heaven; but behold hell; we looked for salvation; but behold destruction: we looked to be made perfectly happy; but (O how our hearts have cheated us!) we must be damned: we thought we had as good hearts as any, as true faith, as sound repentance, as cordial love to God, as any of our neighbours, as any precisians of the country: *we fools counted their life madness*," &c. O! what daggers and swords will these frustrations be to you?

6. If you be loath to see how it is with you now, how will you be able to behold what shall be seen at the day of judgment? Though you now will not know your own hearts; though you are so stately, as not to speak with them, or loath to examine the dirty corners; yet God is coming with his fan: the books must be opened, and every page of thy heart will be unfolded; for *God will bring to light every hidden work of dishonesty*: God will pluck off the rough garment, which thou wearest to deceive: *thy inward parts, which are very wickedness, shall be made manifest*: and then thou shalt be speechless, as if thou hadst a muzzle put upon thy mouth, as the word signifieth. Well, since murder will out (as we say) the secrets of the soul must be brought forth, is it not better by judging ourselves to prevent the woefulness of the last day? Judged we must, and shall be; is it not then thy wisdom to judge thyself here in thy closet, that thou mayest be judged by God with a judgment of absolution, and not of condemna-

tion ? Is it nothing to have all thy unrepented and unforgiven sins published on the house-top, made known to all the world, at the great day ? *How will thine heart endure then, when the Lord shall come to deal with thee ? You will not see ; but you shall see : You will not retire, the world lies in your hearts, business comes in, and takes up all your time and spirits : God is about to strip you, to ease you of your callings, you shall come naked to the bar of God, you shall have no family business to distract you, a fair trial there shall be, but a sad one for thee. Your sins shall find you out. You have had many calls : once more I call upon you, in the name of Christ, to examine your hearts, by the words of this book, which you have, or shall read : And be sure of it, if you will not try yourselves by the word, God will try you by his works. Thus saith the Lord, I will melt them and try them : but how will God melt them and try them ? Shall I not visit them for these things, saith the Lord : shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ? For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation ; because they are burnt up, so that none can pass through them, neither can men bear the voice of the cattle, both the fowl of the heavens, and the beasts are fled, they are gone. And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons ; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.*

CHAP. XXI.

The Pride of Professors.

BEHOLD, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, &c. And is not this devilish sin become our national sin ?

1. With what a bold and impudent face have we come and appeared before God ? Who hath sensibly expressed himself in Abraham's words, *Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.* Instead of a reverential fear of God, our behaviour hath been stout against God, and we have not trembled in his presence ; no, not while we have been terribly threatened by God, yea, when his dreadful threatenings have been terribly executed upon us : even in such times we have irreverently rushed into his presence.

2. How have our wills risen up against the will of God ? The humble soul stoops to God's preceptive and providential will ; but we have wretchedly thwarted God in all his counsels and dispensations. The great controversy betwixt God and man, is, Whose will shall stand, God or man's ? O ! how impudently have we contended with the Lord about this ? We have even thought ourselves too great to be crossed. How many think it even a disgrace to our noble spirits, to be still and silent, even under the hand of God, but they must be clamorous, and speaking against the very heavens ? They are ready to say, " This was not well done by God, he might have given, or continued to us, this and the other mercy : " they dislike many of God's dispensations of providence : they cannot heartily

say, that God holds the reins best, and guides all his affairs with the greatest wisdom: they think if they were the orderers of matters in the world, things would be better governed: like proud Absalom, who wished he were in David's stead, they wish they were in God's stead. A proud man would have others under him, yea he would have the great and glorious God subject to his will, to do what he pleaseth, to yield to his desires. Whence are all your disputings and quarrellings with God, but from the pride of your hearts? The humble soul cries, *Not my will, but thine be done. It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* But so overgrown are we with an opinion of our own wisdom and worth, that we must limit the Holy One, and order him how to rule the world: God must stoop to our prescriptions, or else we swell and break with discontent. "O! Is not God wiser than man? Shall the clay say to the potter, why hast thou shaped me thus? Rather let the potsherds strive with the potsherds (worms with worms) about the preeminence of wills, than we contend with God. O! When will your proud hearts stoop to God? when shall his will be the rule? when will you be willing to be dealt with as God pleaseth?"

3. How loath are we that God should have any glory in the world, unless we share in it, or unless we be the immediate instruments of exalting him? We are willing God should have some glory, so we may share with him: content that free-will and free-grace should share the spoils: the honour of our salvation shall be ascribed, partly to our endeavours, and the honesty of our wills, in choosing the way of life, and partly to Christ's merits. We are willing God should be exalted, so it be by ourselves, so that

we may be famous in promoting the design ; else we are discontented. Few are contented that God's work should be carried on by any hand save their own, that some glory may descend on them. Most are like the proud senators of Rome, that could have been contented, that Christ should have been numbered among their Gods, but that the motion began not with themselves. O ! think with yourselves, how many good motions, tending to the edification of the body of Christ, have miscarried upon this account, because others should not have the honour of beginning them ? Whence can it be, save from the pride of our hearts, that we have so little rejoiced, when God hath been advanced by others, and we had no hand therein ? We are afraid that others' glory will eclipse ours.

4. How scornfully do we look on some of the Lord's commandments ? To reprove offenders, to visit the poor, and confer with them, yea, to be seen in the company of poor Christians, is accounted a disgrace ; we think it an abasement to our spirits, and a discredit to us, to be known in any relation to them. Who can bow to the meanest services of the sanctuary ?

5. How unwilling are we to come to Christ, till we have our double money in our sacks, till we have fitted and prepared ourselves, and made ourselves worthy of him ? Hence all the offers of Christ are neglected, till the soul hath wrought itself into a better disposition for Christ's embraces and loves ; and therefore when we can weep bitterly, and pray fervently, we will come to Christ, but will not be beholden to him to work both to will and to do : we would be the Alpha, and he shall be the Omega : we would begin some glorious work, and then tie him to our performances, and oblige him by our great and glorious services and reformati-
ons :

We hate to be alms-people ; *To beg I am ashamed* : we are loath to receive all from God, we would purchase and merit somewhat.

6. How unthankful are we ? A proud man is always an unthankful man, and an unthankful man is always a proud man. He thinks he deserves all that is conferred upon him. The humble man counts himself less than the least of all God's mercies, but the proud man reckoneth all that he enjoyeth too little. Do not we think God is beholden to us for our duties and services, more than we are to him for life, breath, and all our possessions ?

7. Dare we not set upon the highest services in our own strength, without calling in the help of the Almighty ? The proud man seldom believes his own insufficiencies to think a good thought : he can rush upon prayer, reading the scriptures, meditation, and such difficult works of Christianity, without imploring the aid and succours of Heaven's influences.

8. Are we not hasty beggars ? If we petition for pardons, or holiness, and God comes not to the door at the first or second knock, away we go : *There is no hope, why should I wait on the Lord any longer ?* We dare prescribe God a day, and by thus limiting God, our pride appears, as if we knew the fittest seasons for deliverance and mercy. Were we of an humble heart, we would wait all our days with patience, yea, we would resolve to be exalting of God, whatever becomes of ourselves, and to pay him the homage of duty, though he for just reasons be pleased to frown upon our prayers, and to deny us all the requests of our souls. I hear some say, they would pray, hear, read, wait upon God all their days, so they were sure God would accept them, and smile upon them in the last hour : I say to these, you ought to serve

God with all your time and strength, you are bound to God in duty, though God were under no obligations by promise unto you. O the pride of our spirits ! that we dare tell God, We will not serve thee unless thou humour us.

9. Do not we think God hath punished us above our deserts ? Do not we hence cry out more of our smart and pain, than we do of our sins and provocations ? Were we humble, we would bless the Lord, that he hath *restrained his rough wind in the day of his east wind* : we would wonder, that it is so well with us, that we are not in a worse condition : We would cry out, *It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins* : How loath are we to confess our iniquities have deserved all that we suffer, and a great deal more, and therefore to humble ourselves for our sins ? How do we endeavour to hide our sins from God, man, and ourselves ?

10. How apt are we to admire ourselves for supposed excellencies ? For supposed beauty, parts, reason, wit, and understanding, yea, and for supposed grace ? Man (saith one) is a proud piece of flesh, and a small matter will make him shew his pride, and spread his plumes.

11. How apt are we to boast of any good we do ? Of our valour in the field, of our discourses in such and such company, how wisely we discharged such a service, how well we behaved ourselves in such an action ? *Come see my zeal for the Lord.* Look to your hearts, you will find them unduly transported, as with the thoughts of your gifts and graces, so with what you do through the gift of grace. Our very graces are often an occasion of boasting. It is a rare thing to see a man rich in gifts, and poor in spirit. *Even knowledge puffeth up.*

12. Doth not any thing of ours swell us? Are not some puffed up with their fine clothes, new attires, ribbons, dressings, yea with their very spots? Their feathers, their hair, the excrements of beasts and men, make them fly high. Are not some puffed up with their birth? Hence they boast that they have the blood of kings and nobles running in their veins: or else that they are of the stock of Abraham, descended from parents eminent for piety, though they have sadly degenerated from their lives and walks. How many are swelled with their estates? That they have shops full, houses full, and bags full, puffeth them up. Whilst all the treasure is shewed, how glad is the heart? Even *Hezekiah was glad to shew the ambassadors the house of his precious things.* How are others puffed up with the smiles and respects of great men? And yet how soon may the sun be overcast? Then they are no more heeded than the dial is, when the sun is in a cloud; how doth the bodily strength and perfections of others swell them, though every moment they are going down into the dust? *What is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away?* How are others swelled with their church privileges? *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are we.* These are lying words not to be trusted in. Others with their revelations and high enjoyments? Paul was in danger of being *exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations* therefore *was given to him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure.* How few have heeded that of the apostle, *Let no man think of himself more highly than he ought to think?* and that, *If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.* How have we

been puffed up with our reformation, ministers, churches, professors? Preferring them before others at home and abroad.

13. How little suspicion have we of ourselves? Of our baseness and sinfulness, the deceits and treachery of our own hearts? With how much confidence do we thrust ourselves into wicked men's company, and fear not to be leavened with them? How little do we suspect that we shall fall from the grace we have, or seem to have? *We are high-minded, and therefore fear not.* We do not suspect that there are worse abominations within than yet are discovered. How do we (pretend to) bless God that our hearts are good? we fear not the worst of ourselves. If others be overcome with uncleanness, passion, &c. we are confident we shall never so dishonour God.

14. Do not we shew our displeasure when any go about to discover the vileness within? I have heard of some ladies, that have hated the glass that gave them a true sight of their spots, and deformities. Humble David loved them best who most convincingly reproved him for what was amiss in him.

15. We must be pleased: we must have our sports, and the utmost of our liberty, though God and men suffer by it never so much: we cannot stoop to deny ourselves some lawful contentments, though God be to be honoured thereby.

16. How have we been troubled that any save ourselves have ruled and been in authority? Few have learnt the humility of Jotham's olive-tree, fig-tree, and vine? The bramble thinks himself worthy to be in the highest place. O! what fightings, what sidings, what plots to get higher? Haman was never contented till every knee bowed: not so much as one Mordecai must be excused. If men would but speak out,

they think they are fitter for magistrates and ministers, than those that are employed : so that whereas the humble man thinks every one better than himself, they on the contrary think themselves the only men. Do not we account it below us to *submit to every ordinance of man, though for the Lord's sake* ? And when we cannot do what we are commanded, who suffers meekly and not in anger against the highest powers ? Do not we suffer in proud wrath ?

17. How glad are we if others take notice of our actions ? And how are we pleased if they commend us for them ; and yet we would not have them think so ? We will discommend our own prayers, for deadness, straitness, and ourselves for want of parts, &c. on purpose to draw forth others' praise. How few are unwilling that others should have good thoughts of them, in reference to themselves ? How few are troubled at the praises of their friends more than at flashes of lightning cast into their faces ?

18. How do we rejoice when others cry us up, even when we know it is unjustly, when we know how hollow-hearted, low-spirited, and selfish we are ? Are not we exceedingly pleased at the flowers that are spread upon our dead corpses ? Though the praises be not due to us, yet how do we drink them in as the hart doth water.

19. How magisterial have we been ? What great dictators to others ; as if all were bound to dance after us ? We will not abate at all, but every poor Mordecai must do obeisance to our opinion.

20. How are we guilty of despising, yea scorning those that are (as we think) below us in birth, in estate, in power, in parts, and gifts, yea in graces ? How do we evidence our slighting of them in our looks, in our words, in our gestures.

and behaviour? Pride (saith one) is a bad mother of many bad children, these three especially, boasting of ourselves, contending with, and despising of others. How unlike are we herein unto God? *Behold God is mighty* (i. e. most mighty most great, the positive is put for the superlative degree) *and yet he despiseth not any*, i. e. any of those who have no might, no greatness: yea how do we herein reproach our Maker? God (saith one) made every man an object of respect, or pity, it is pride that makes any the objects of contempt, and in them their maker. *Whoso mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker.*

21. How few few will confess their faults unto others? Perhaps they will reform, but hate it to the death, to go and acknowledge their trespasses to others, whom it is clear and proved they have trespassed against. How many have you injured by tale-bearing, back-biting, &c. Must not God work a miracle to persuade us to make restitution, to go to the parties wronged, and confess the wrong there, and then to go from house to house to vindicate and clear the party, there where before we had wickedly stained and aspersed him? This makes me cry out, *Lord, who shall be saved?* *Lord, many are called, but few are chosen.*

22. When we go about that too too much neglected duty of fraternal corruption, how loftily do we manage it? How do our words, yea looks, and gestures, evidence our haughtiness? *The child behaveth himself proudly against the antient.*

23. What a stir, what a noise do we make to vindicate ourselves when aspersed and calumniated? Whereas the humble soul would never stir to clear himself (as knowing how much guilt and sin there is within) were it not for the honour of God, and the edification of the Lord's people, which may be hindered, if prejudices

and unjust reprobates be not removed : alas ! most men study revenge, and, like the grave are insatiable in their malicious vindications.

24. How bitter have we been against dissenting brethren ? Would we not have cast them out of the land, if we might have had our wills ? Did not we talk of shipping away all that would not submit to our way of worship ? Did not we count them, who were divided in circumstances and ceremonies from us, like dogs and pagans, unfit to subsist among us ?

No wonder, if for these things God make us a shame, and a derision, a proverb, and a by-word to all the nations round about us. O ! our pride testifies to our faces : we are guilty of what brought down fire on Sodom : This is the sin, that God setteth himself in battle array against (so the word for resisting in that scripture, *God resisteth the proud*, signifieth :) It is that which makes God abhor us and our offerings. *Every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord.* Believe it, God's eyes are upon the haughty, that he may bring them down, and he watcheth his opportunity to do it. *The Lord knoweth the proud afar off.* When God meets with a spectacle, that he cannot endure to look upon, he turns from it, whilst it is afar off. What shall I say ? Pride is the first of those *seven things which are an abomination to the Lord.* And no wonder that God so loatheth it; while it crosseth the great design of God in the Gospel which is to humble the mountains, *that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he that glorieth, should glory only in the Lord.*

CHAP. XXII.

Professors' Intemperance in Eating.

THOUGH pride was the first spark that blew up the glory of Sodom, yet there was also fulness of bread, that made the flame the greater. *Behold this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, &c.* Their pride was evidenced in their fulness of bread, as the cause in its effect. The word σοφροσύνη, which signifieth to be temperate, is (as one well observes) applied frequently to the mind, in opposition to pride; because sobriety proceeds from a humble sense that nothing is ours, but all that we have is God's; and all intemperance is commonly the issue of a proud spirit, which makes men look on themselves as owners, and all creatures as their proper goods, which are perfectly at their disposal. Hence the crown of pride, and the drunkards of Ephraim, are both names for the same persons. And is not our pride evidenced in our fulness of bread? Sodom's intemperance in eating (not to insist on intemperance in drinking) was very great, but I fear England hath exceeded Sodom in this respect: I will not say all your *labour is for the mouth*, (as Solomon complains) *and yet the appetite is not filled*; but this I say, that some live to eat, some sacrifice all to the belly, to some the belly is a god. Few can displease their appetite: like profane Esau, they part from their heritage, from the blessing of the first-born, for a mess of pottage, for a little pleasure to the taste. How will we

deny ourselves in respect of life, when we cannot deny ourselves in respect of a little meat? As heaven and God are low, very low with them, that cannot deny themselves in a little Indian smoke, in a pipe, in a cup of liquor, but will be immoderate in these, though thereby they hazard the displeasure of God: so are they very low with us, if we cannot deny ourselves in our morsels. All our ruin came in at this door, that Adam ventured the displeasure of God, to eat a little pleasant fruit. A man would think, that the wounds we received by the mouth, should make us check our appetite all our days.

1. How have we been guilty of eating too much? A little would content nature, which hath therefore given us a little mouth and stomach, to teach us (saith an ancient) moderation. How have *our hearts been overcharged with surfeiting*, while wicked men with drunkenness? How have we forgotten Christ's charge against this sin, even to his own disciples? Have we not hereby been disabled to perform the service which we owe to God? As some have been strong to drink, so others to eat: both have been unfitted to wait upon God thereby. The end of our eating should have been to fit us, not to indispose us for the service of God. We should measure our cheer by that which nature requir-eth, and not by that which a greedy appetite desireth. We divest ourselves of man, of reason, that should guide us, when we are led by a sensual appetite. And yet alas! when we have eaten enough, and perhaps more than enough, a new dish at the second course makes us fall on without fear or wit, and we put not a knife to our throat. Serving divers lusts and pleasures, is the high-way to damnation. This way sin entered into the world, and in this way, O! how many are posting to hell? If you would adopt

yourselves *children of wrath*, then fulfil the desires of the flesh. O that we should be so senseless, so brutish, as to venture the eternal ruin of our souls to gratify our appetites for a quarter of an hour! *She that fared deliciously hath torment and sorrow given her.* If that you will choose to be beasts here, and to eat as beasts, as much as you can, know that heaven will not (as Noah's ark did) admit of any beasts within it. When Tertullian gives an account of the Christians' feasts; "In our feeding (saith he) we remember that we are to pray at night: prayer is the first and last dish of the feast: and when we depart our behaviour is so religious and modest, that one would have thought, we had rather been at a sermon, than at a supper." Blush, O reader! to consider how far short we fall of these Christians in our banqueting hours. Believe it, intemperance and luxury are national sins, the sins of England. It was spoken (unless I am misinformed) of our nation, "That we build as if we should live for ever, and eat as if we should die presently." O! when shall we imitate that great apostle? *All things* (saith he) *are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any.* It is a base thing for a man to be under the power of drinks, apparel, recreations, and so of flesh, of meats, to be a vassal to those things over which the Lord hath given him dominion. He that loveth any thing too much, (saith Aquinas) is, in a sense, servant thereunto. And what saith the apostle? *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are, to whom ye obey, whether of sin, &c.* How many serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies? How many are like the men of the old world, *given to eating?* so the word in the original properly signifieth.

2. How have our meats borne no proportion to our gains and incomes? The rich man that fared deliciously, had some pretence for it, for he had riches to countervail the expences of his table : but doth not the lowness of our estates require a meaner table? God knows we have been worse than infidels on this account, in that we have been so far from *providing for our own*, that to pamper the flesh with costly diet, we have suddenly impoverished ourselves, and brought our children to live upon others' trenchers, whereas we should have abated of our superfluities for their sakes, if not for our own. Go voluptuous wretch, unto the ant, and to the bee, they provide for winter ; but thou hast had no forecast, and so *poverty comes in on thee and thine*, as *an armed man*, irresistibly.

3. How have our tables been unsuitable to the times we live in? Whether Zion wear the garments of joy, or of heaviness, all is one, the belly must be served, our dishes must not abate. Thou farest deliciously every day : all times are alike to thee. This is a great sin, and I cannot but charge many professors with it. Respect is not had to the tokens of God's wrath. *We eat without fear* : without fear of the wrath of God, that is ready to break forth upon us. *In this day doth the Lord of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth : and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep*, (actions lawful enough at another time) *eating flesh and drinking wine, &c.* *And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts.* We have made little or no distinction of times : perhaps a fast every month is (carelessly) kept : but every day should be a day of abstinence, every day we should abate of

what we might enjoy, if the judgments of God were not amongst us, and others impending over us ? God hath a controversy with us for feasting, when *Joseph is in the pit*, and for our *eating the lambs of the flocks* ; for that we are *not grieved for the affliction of Joseph*.

4. How little respect have we had to the necessities of the saints ? O, if there were any true love to God, to religion, to the church of God, and to the saints of the Most High, we would abate of our worldly comforts in this day, we would cut ourselves short of what we were wont to lay out, not only in fine clothes, but in house-keeping, in expensive meats and drinks, we would not give such liberty to the satisfying of the flesh, we would be more sparing in our diet, that we might be in the greater capacity to promote pious and charitable designs. But alas ? *iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold*.

5. Do not we eat without an holy fear of God ? The elders of Israel did eat their bread *before the Lord*. But so have not we, so do not we, eat as in the presence of God. Have not some been so eager upon the pleasing of the flesh, and gratifying of their sensual appetites, that they have (secretly at least) been troubled at a long grace (as it is called) before meat ? Have not some fallen to their meat without invoking God to be with them ? How unlike are such unto Christ, whose usual practice it was, to lift up his eyes to heaven, and crave a blessing upon the creatures before he did partake of them ? How distracted have been the thoughts of others that have prayed, in that short time ? How were their thoughts on the meats and drinks ? How hastily do men after a blessing is craved run to the dish, without any the least pause or consideration whether God heard them, yea or no, when

they called to him? How commonly do we raze our petitions, snatch them out of God's hands, I mean, contradict all our prayers? We pray our discourses may be heavenly, and they are altogether earthly. Few can say as blessed Dod was wont at the close of the meal, "Blessed be God, not one word of earthly things since we sat down?" We pray we may eat for God, and we eat for ourselves. We cannot say that *our spikenard sends forth his pleasant smells, whilst we are at the table.* We have not so good a plea to make as some, *we have ate and drank in thy presence.* This is not written over our tables, *Thou God seest.* We can seldom call our table Penuel, because we have seen God in this place. How little do we consider, that they are God's creatures. *She did not know that I gave her corn, &c.* And that as the meat is God's so it is he that gives us appetites, and strength and ability to put every crumb into our mouths; *for in him we live and move.* How little do we believe that we must account for every bit and drop? How little do we consider that God stoops the creature to us, that we may stoop to him, and lay down our lives as willingly for God's honour, as God causeth the creature to bleed and die for our use? How little do we think of the heavenly banquet, that our father is preparing for us, where the cloth shall never be taken away, where we shall hunger and thirst no more, but be fully satisfied, and that for ever and ever? Examine your spirits and frames at your tables, whether the fear of God be before your eyes, whether you stand in awe of him? It may be found that you never more forget God, than when God is mostly remembering you: when his goods are most in your hands and mouths, your mouths are so full, that they cannot shew forth his praise. your eyes are so intent upon

your meal, that you forget Jehovah. Are there not some that will crave a blessing before they eat, that yet fail to return thanks afterwards, though Joel saith in his prophecy to God's people, *ye shall eat and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God?*

6. Have not we fed without a Christian fear of scandalizing others upon our eating profusely? What saith the drunkard? Why may not I toss the can or pot (in plain English) be drunk as well as such and such gormandize? why may not I drink immoderately as well as such eat immoderately? why may not we sit one or two hours to drink, as well as such sit one hour or two to fill their paunch with meat? Gluttons harden and justify drunkards. Jude will tell you, that sensual persons are the spots of a Christian society. The old Gentiles in Cyprian's days, were much scandalized at the intemperance of Christians. "Lo, these great boasters, who pretend to be redeemed from the tyranny of the devil, and to be dead to the world, what slaves are they to their own sensual desires?" O my brethren! *It is good neither to eat flesh, or to drink wine, or any thing else, whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or made weak.*

7. Do not we eat without a prudent fear of the snares that are in our dishes? In eating there ought to be much caution. Job was afraid of the entertainments of his children. He was a wise man, and knew that there were more guests than were invited. I wish we knew it too. We think if the sons of God come together, the devil will not come with them, though the scripture assures us he will. It would be some check when we sit at the table to consider that the first immoderate sop is handed over by the devil, and he enters with it into our souls.

8. How have we had low, base, earthly, sensual, and devilish ends in our eating? not to refresh our bodies, but our palates, not to glorify God, but to pamper the flesh? yea, have not some men fed on such and such dishes on purpose to irritate and provoke their lusts? Sure our enemy is strong enough, we had need beat down the body and keep it under, and not put weapons into our enemies' hands. What saith the wise man? *When thou sittest to eat with a ruler* (such keep plentiful tables, especially magistrates on their feast days), *consider diligently what is before thee, and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite*, i. e. Bridle thine appetite by diligence; yea, force; let not the slave always be on horseback, always rule; be as circumspect, as if thou wert under the razor: or thus, *consider diligently what is before thee, else thou puttest a knife to thy throat*, i. e. thou endangerest thy life, yea, thy soul, shouldest thou give way to thy greedy appetite to feed upon all the dainties on the table. It is a thousand to one but thy meats will be incentives to lust. What saith the apostle, *Whether you eat or drink, &c. let all be done to the glory of God.* Why doth the apostle name those actions of eating and drinking, but because we commonly eat and drink (at best) merely to please the appetite, and not to fit for God's service? When we have taken as much as serves this end, yet we must have one bit more, or one dish more to please our fleshly desires, and so God and the devil must part stakes.

To conclude this subject: I believe many men dig their graves with their teeth, and their hells with their tongues, their liquorish tongues. Among the millions that are now in the grave or hell, their inordinate appetite hastened most thither. I say not but we may please our pa-

lates ; at some times especially, a great liberty is indulged to the sick ; but if we have not an higher design than to please the appetite, our belly is our God. Little do many think that they are setting up another God at their tables. The Babylonians had Bel for their God, a god of brass ; but these men have a god of flesh. The Rabbies say, “ he is a glutton that eats a pound of flesh, and drinks a quart of wine.” Have not we many such ? and do they not sacrifice to their God with a bowed knee too ? Repent, O England ! repent, of thy abuse of the good creatures of God, and thereby of thy sacrilegious robbing of God of his worship and time. How often have ye so overcharged yourselves that you have been unfit for any acts of worship, yea, for any of the works of your particular callings ? Your heads have been heavy, and spirits dull, and so God hath had the carcase, but *excesses have taken away the heart. the tabret and wine are in your feasts, but you regard not the work of the Lord, &c. therefore my people are gone into captivity.* I wish two things for you : First, that you would be as ingenuous as Austin was, who confessed he was no drunkard ; but yet sometimes too immoderate in eating. And Secondly, that you would be restless till God hath taught you, what he did him : “ Lord (saith he) thou hast now taught me to use my meat as my medicine, to repair, not to oppress nature. O ! when will *the grace of God appear, and teach us to deny worldly lusts, and to live soberly ?*

CHAP. XXIII.

The Abundance of Idleness to be found in Professors.

A THIRD sin of Sodom was idleness, *Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, &c. an abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters.* This sin is the companion of the former : when the belly is full, the bones would be at rest, and when men have eat and drank to excess, then they rise up to play. This, and the former, are city sins, they were found in Sodom and Gomorrah, and I wish they were not among us also.

1. How are we guilty of abundance of idleness in our particular callings? Few have this for their motto, *Laboremus*. Let us be working : I mean working that which we ought. How many at the great day will God upbraid with, *O wicked and slothful servant !* Every man hath a talent of time and strength, but it is hid, it is not employed, at least as it ought. God made not man to play, but to sweat out his living. It was God's ordinance in paradise, and since that, we are enjoined to *labour with our hands, and not to eat the bread of idleness.* How many, *because they have not done good among their people shall die in their iniquity ?* Our land is full of drones ; and no wonder ; for we train up our children in idleness, and indulge them, whilst wasting the first of their days in foolish pleasures and recreations. Foreigners breed their children (to our shame be it spoken) to work those gaies with their hands, which our children must play away their time with : hence they having

inured themselves to idleness they hate labour for the future. Christ saw *some standing idle* : here he might see many : he could not endure it, he thought it unreasonable, *why stand ye here all the day idle* ? O, how many are idle all the days of their lives ? How many gentlemen and their sons are there without a calling ? They live as if God had sent them into the world to make their hands as perches for birds to sit upon : they are of no use to the public. In cities how idle are the dames ? They live as if God had given them reasonable souls, and the light of the sun only to dress themselves, to view a glass, and to paint and adorn their carcasses. *There are some among you that work not at all* : and yet busy-bodies, busy to invent ways to pass away time, though time be still running, and they are hastening into eternity. Doing nothing (saith the apostle) and yet working every where save where they should : busy to go from house to house to complement friends, to devour others' times : busy to carry tales and news, but hating the work of their calling, wherein God hath set them.

The whole life of many is, to eat, and drink, and sleep, and sport, and sit and talk, and laugh themselves fat (but there is leanness in their souls). A kind of vagrant people they be ; that, having little to do, the devil is loath they should be idle, and therefore he hires them to devour time, to carry news and tales to mispend others' times : *they learn to be idle* : they study which way they may mispend time, wandering from house to house, and yet they are not only idle, but busy-bodies. One compares them to pedlars, opening their packs, and dropping here a tale, and there a tale. These are at leisure to hear the devil, and to observe his orders. He that will not serve God at home, the devil, ra-

ther than he shall stand out, will send him of his errands, and get him to put his sickle into another man's corn. "Go (saith Satan) into that house, and rail against such a good man, carry his miscarriage from one to another, till his name rots and stinks in their nostrils : go to such a man's door, he is employed in reading the scriptures and good books, or catechising his family," &c. Go and divert him, eat up his time, that he may have no leisure for such works. He goes, he is a busy-body, a tatler too. He must go whom the devil drives ; hence occasion is given to the adversary to speak reproachfully, for that so many are turned aside after Satan. Let it be considered and lamented, how much precious time is devoured in the bed ; five hours sleep will suffice for some constitutions : The utmost that physicians allow, is seven hours, but some waste and bury themselves in their beds almost half their time. How little do many consider, that in the day of judgment they must give account as for every idle word, so for their idleness in their bed-chambers ? Sluggard, view the sun, it is running a race, while thou art tumbling on thy bed, and crying, *O that this were to labour* : View the wind and the air, they are in motion : view the waters, they stink and corrupt, unless running : nay view the dull earth, it is not so dull as thou art, it brings forth for the use of man. *Go to the ant thou sluggard*, yea any where, *consider the ways of all, save thyself, and be wise*. What I a professor, and yet guilty of an *unnatural sin* ? Nature puts all creatures into motion, and to provide for themselves : *thou art worse than an infidel* ; yea worse than a beast : the poor infant cannot suck without labour, and yet thou wouldst live without labour. *God takes this so ill, that he would not have them to eat, who will not*

labour, and if we know such, we sin if we feed them. God hath not forbid meat to be given to any other sinners, only these are not to be fed, let them starve and die if they will not labour. *The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold, therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing :* God hath no pity for drones, and he would not have us to pity them : drones are to be beaten out of the hive, and starved in winter : It is the workman that is worthy of meat in Christ's account : idleness hath brought much evil upon you, and bred many in you, it begets many diseases in the body, but many more in the soul : *it exempts a man from the protection of angels,* and it exposeth to God's wrath : it brought ruin upon Sodom, and the cities round about, *and they are set forth for an example suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

2. How are we guilty of abundance of idleness in our general callings ? And above all idleness, spiritual sloth is most dangerous. I find some with unwearied diligence, labouring to enlarge their possessions, and to raise their posterity ; they rise early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, but all is for the body : they do little or nothing for their precious souls, and for eternity. Christ and heaven stand by, and few regard them : *Few work out their salvation with fear and trembling.* Some will not be at so much pains, for their souls, as to perform the common outward duties of religion. They will go to the market, or to be merry with friends, many a mile ; but if a lecture be but a few paces from their thresholds, they count it intolerable to wet their feet, to expose themselves to the air : well, well ; *God hath eased you of this labour.* But if men are for some easy parts of religion, yet how few are for the difficult parts thereof ? They cannot endure to watch their hearts, to

sanctify the Lord's day so strictly, as not to *think their own thoughts*, nor *speak their own words*, nor *do their own deeds*. How many professors have so long given way to their lazy distempers, have lain so long upon the bed of sloth, that when we press them to any painful and laborious duties, they think it excuse enough to say, "We have put off our coat, and loath we are to put it on": We have given way to sloth so long, that we hate to take pains for Christ, and for eternity? Hence self-examination, meditation, watchfulness against the first risings of sin, mortification of inward heart-sins, &c. these works are totally laid by; and the longer we neglect them, the more difficulty there is to persuade us to take them up. We are like truant-boys, who hate their book after a long vacation. All we have to uphold ourselves with, is this, that the spirit is willing, when God knows the contrary. We are willing to be rich, and therefore take pains: so we would in spiritual things too, if we were so desirous of them. If we were willing to enjoy Christ in our closets, would we be even asleep there upon our knees? If we were willing to know the way to glory, would we not take so much pains, as to *go to the shepherds' tents, and ask for the good old way*? "O! O! It will cut you to the heart, when you come to hell-gate, that you missed of heaven, for not inquiring your way thither; and that you took more pains to be rich, and to damn your souls, than to save them. Had that time been spent in prayer, holy conference, and in self-arraignments, which was wasted in the bed, shop, fields, unnecessarily, you might have had an eternal rest; whereas hell will be, as intolerable to all, so especially to them, who have *stood idle all the day long*."

CHAP. XXIV.

The Unmercifulness of Professors.

THE fourth sin of Sodom was this, *Neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy*: that is, they were unmerciful and inhuman. And are not some professors even in England very hard-hearted and cruel? I have often thought and said, That our late civil wars have had too great influence upon us, to make us cruel. *If there be among you a poor man, of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.* O! The poor we have always with us! But, *When we make a feast, do we call the poor?* Who invites the guests that Christ hath bid for our tables? When I consider how rare, *bowels of mercy and kindness* are, it makes me fear (and I have scripture grounds for my fear) that few are *the elect of God*. O hard-hearted professors!—Hear ye the word of the Lord: *He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.* He shall have all judgment, pure judgment, without any mixtures of mercy, unmixed wrath shall be his portion: Christ is so resolved to punish the unmerciful, that he will overlook any sinner rather than him; yea, for the greater honour of the justice of God, the Lord seems to begin and end the great assizes with the arraignment and sentencing of the unmerciful man. How few compassionate professors are there? The proper vital act of mercy is compassion. How few

resent the miseries of others, as if they were their own? How few set themselves to do good, to those who are miserable? Such, whatever they pretend, are indeed unmerciful; for mercy is an active and a communicative thing. How few are merciful to others' souls? How few pity, and set themselves to help sinning souls? (but more of this under another head). How few are merciful to the bodies of others? How many are there that will not spare of their superfluities, to clothe Christ's naked shoulders, or to fill his hungry belly? Men lay out more to adorn a cupboard, or the walls of their houses, than ever they gave to Jesus Christ, and his servants, all their days; men can feed their birds, their cats, their dogs, their swine; but the sucklings, and lambs of Jesus Christ perish for want: Christ tells you, what kindness you show to his spouse, his friends, his children, he counts as done unto himself: and believe it, all the scorn, and neglects you have cast on, either, his ambassadors, or poor saints, he will remember, another day. Go to thy closet, and carry this with thee, *whoso stoppeth his ear at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard*. If you give, to whom is it? Is it not only to the poor of your own party? But hath not the Lord charged you, *to give to every man that asketh*? Hath he excepted any but idlers? Are not you to *do good to all*, though *especially to the household of faith*? And among them, should not your greatest charity have been set forth on them, who are become poor, not by vile courses, but by God's providence, and for conscience sake? But alas! how few can appeal to the heart-searching God concerning their mercifulness? How few (if destruction from God be any terror to them) dare imprecate upon themselves, what Job did

in case of unmercifulness ? How few dare say to God, *If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have eaten my morsel, myself alone, and the fatherless have not eaten thereof, &c. If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering, &c. then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone.*

CHAP. XXV.

The Unrighteousness, or Unfaithfulness of Professors, in trading.

ALAS ! alas ! instead of mercifulness, behold oppression, violence, deceit, fraud, &c. This is a lamentation, and should be for a lamentation. Instead of giving to others that which is our own, we deny them that which is their own : instead of letting go our own right, and those dues, which in justice others are bound to pay unto us ; yea, instead of giving more of our own, to help them in their necessities (which mercy calls for, even not only not to require, what others owe us, when Providence hath disenabled them to pay us, but also to give them more to support their feeble state withal) behold injustice, in propriety of speech. What defraudings is there one of another ? How do men, not only take all advantages of their brethren, to get what is due to them, as to seize on a mortgage, when the mortgage-money cannot be paid, or to sue a bond, or turn a man out of his lease, when the day of payment is missed, &c. but also take advantages from the necessities of the poor to over-reach them,

to get from them, either their houses or goods, to be sure what is not their own? Have not we *grinded the faces of the poor?* God will reckon for this speedily. Look over the prophets, and see whether unmercifulness and unrighteousness ever went unpunished.

How few are there who mete to others, as they would have them to measure to themselves? The rule of Christ, whereby peace among men would be preserved, and much scandal prevented, is not heeded by us. We do not deal with others as we would be dealt with, though Christ says unto us, *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them* · for this is the law and the prophets, and though we are also exhorted by the apostle to follow whatever things are *true*, and *honest*, and *just*, and *pure*, and *lovely*. We are apt to *follow a multitude to do evil*, what the greater part of the world are wont to do, is the rule whereby we steer; hence we vary from that rule of righteousness, which the Lord hath prescribed; through the prevalency of self-love, through a covetous humour, we are loath to heed, what may any whit thwart a worldly interest.

How common, but cursed a principle is it, that every man may get for his wares, as much as he can? Hence men take advantage of others' necessities, or of their want of skill: Hence bad wares are put into men's hands for good wares, or else unreasonable demands are made to the prejudice of the buyer: would we be so dealt with?

When men depend upon our honesty and ingenuity to sell them a good pennyworth, how common is it with a specious tongue, and seeming affection to our neighbour's good to overreach him, and cheat him, though he reposeth confidence in us?

How commonly do men demand a far greater sum for their wares, than they will accept? Hereby they shew an oppressing mind, if their customers would but comply with them. The Quakers will rise up in judgment, to condemn this generation. Is it not a foul shame, that they by their light within (which at best is but the light of a natural conscience) should exceed others, who pretend to an higher principle, even the light of grace? But O, how do men mind profit more than their own honour and reputation, yea (which is more inexcusable) than the reputation of Christ and his gospel? The name of God suffers, not so much when thou art rotten-hearted in thy closet, as it doth when thou art a cheater in thy shop? But woe and alas! Men are so set upon gain, that they can be contented to be voiced for cheats and cozeners, so they may but enlarge their estates: this is a salve for their sore: they cannot be ignorant how the gospel suffers, and how many prejudices are strengthened in the hearts of wicked men against religion, by observing professors' unreasonable demands for their wares, and yet they continue grievous exacters. Is it not matter of lamentation, that some profess, they had rather deal with a Turk, or with a Jew, than with such and such a Christian? and that they meet with fairer quarter from drunkards, &c. in their trades, than from precisians? By reason of you *the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles*. Wherein doth your *light shine before men*? They cannot dive into your hearts, they can only discern your actions: they know not what your love to God is, though you pretend much to knowledge, yet knowledge void of charity and honesty, is to them an abomination.

How few trade in fear, lest by getting an estate, they lose God, and a good conscience?

When one told Latimer, That he was cozened in paying for a knife double to what it was worth, "No, (said he) he hath not cozened me, but his own conscience." No wonder that tradesmen complain of deadness in their families and closets, and impute it to their callings, (and thereby charge God implicitly). Alas, it is not their calling hath straitened and deadened their hearts towards God ; but their oppression and deceit in their businesses have provoked God to leave them ; and then they are, in the business of God, *like a silly dove, without an heart.* Hath not God expressly charged you, *Let no man go beyond, or overreach another in any matter, because that the Lord is the avenger of all such ?* The vengeance of God is upon thee, in the straitness of thy spirit in duties, and without repentance it will follow thee, till it hath laid thee in the pit of hell.

How do men labour to engross all trade to themselves, by exclaiming against their neighbours, and by under-selling them, at one time, that they may engage the buyer to become their customer, of whom they will surely fetch out their pennyworths, in the next bargain that is driven ?

How do men boast of selling their commodities at such and such rates, though their consciences must needs suggest to them, that they have over-sold them, and therein have declined the rules of moderation and righteousness ?

When you have sold too dear, and so cheated your brother, though conscience, in times of sickness and danger, begins to contend with you about it, yet how loath are you to make restitution for the wrong you have offered ? How unlike are you to them in Nehemiah ? *Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them ; so will we do as thou sayest.* If a

Nehemiah should say, *So God spake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise even thus he be shaken out and emptied, you would hardly say Amen, and praise the Lord.*

When men buy a commodity, how apt are they to discommend it, to bring down the price, to say, it is naught, when all the while they know it is offered on easy terms? How do buyers take the advantage of the seller's ignorance of the worth of his own goods? There is a cursed proverb amongst Englishmen, but in too great request, That a man may not only sell as dear, but buy as cheap as he can. Few like Austin, that bought a book, at an unskilful stationer's hands, for an inconsiderable price, and afterwards gave the value of it. *Bread of deceit is sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.*

How often do buyers (even as sellers often say, they will not, they cannot take a penny less for such a commodity, so) answer they will not give a farthing more for what they have cheapened, and yet all the while intend to come up to the seller's price?

How common is it, for men to take up wares, and to promise payment at such a day, and yet fail? Yea, how do they promise, though they know they shall not be able to be as good as their word? It were better for thee to beg thy bread, than thus to steal from thy neighbour. Thou art ashamed to beg, as he of old: thou shouldest be ashamed much more to do worse, viz. to defraud thy neighbour. *The getting of treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity, tossed to and fro of them that seek death:* It is a thing very frequent, tossed to and fro, but *it is a vanity*, and they that use it are *felones de se*, they do but seek death and destruction by it.

How few are there that in their buying and selling, give a proof of their loving their neighbours as themselves, their neighbour's goods and welfare as their own?

“O, when will ye be *holy in all manner of conversation*: Holy in your trades, as well as in your church-assemblies? Holy in the shop, and in all secular employments? So holy, as to abide with God in your callings? When will ye trade for God, rather than for self? When will ye labour with your hands, that ye may be *able to give*, and not only to *receive*? When will ye trade in fear, and be *in the fear of the Lord all the day*; and that, lest your shop should prove your bane; and whilst seeking after the mammon of this life, ye lose the true substance? Is this thy prayer before thou enterest upon thy calling? (O that it were!) Lord help me to trade for thee, whilst for myself; and for the good of my neighbour's soul, body, goods, as well as for my own.”

How few, among all the several sorts of traders, render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's? St. Jerome long since hath told you, That Cæsar is not proper, but appellative. All the emperors were called Cæsars, from Julius Cæsar.

How can you quiet your consciences to steal custom, as many of you do? What is it, save the law, that gives you right to all you have? And by the law, so much of your goods is the king's: it is alienated from you to his crown and revenue: how dare you cheat him? Should you think it hard measure to pay so great a tribute? Have you forgot what Christ (who came under the law) did? Though tribute was exacted of him, when the children were free, yet he would work a miracle, rather than give offence, in denying to pay the fine, that was imposed on him.

Why do ye not take the safest course, if it be a disputable matter? To be sure you will not give offence to God, to the king, to your conscience, by paying customs; but you may to all by defrauding. Do you herein as you would be dealt with? If you were the head, would you have the inferior members impoverish the head? If you were the political father, would you have your children cheat you? Do not you by bribes and otherwise, tempt the king's officers to be false to their trust, and to damn their souls by perjury and treachery?

Lastly, Consider, that self-love and self-interest are prevalent, as to make you to favour and enrich yourselves, so also to bribe your minds and judgments, and to enslave them to your base passions. O, consider how apt is every one unequally to favour himself, and to suck in any corrupt and absurd reasonings, whereby he may greatness himself, though by the ruin of others? If you say (as they of the silver-shrines, *This brings in our gain*) We cannot subsist without stealing customs: how else can we live? A father will tell you, *Indigna vox Christiano*, &c. It ill becomes a Christian's mouth, to ask, How shall I live? Not one that Christ called to forsake trades and professions, did ever answer him, I must not give over my gain: they only reformed, or relinquished their trades, when Christ called them. Till you can relinquish unlawful gains, you are none of Christ's disciples. Those in the Acts, *that burnt their unlawful books*, to the loss of thousands, shewed themselves true converts, *so mightily grew the word and prevailed*. O! When Tyre shall be converted, her trading and dealings shall be sacred, *Her merchandise, and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord*.

Here give me leave to add the sin of lying ; by far too common among all sorts of traders, as well as others. And truly this sin comes not improperly under the head of injustice. Justice, even when it is not taken most largely (so it is taken for all religion) comprehends our whole duty to our neighbour, as to matters of right : thus, by virtue of the fifth commandment, to do justly, is to give our parents their due honour, whether they be natural, civil, or spiritual : in respect of the sixth, it is to preserve the life of our neighbour, and to have a care, that we injure him not in his being : In reference to the seventh, it is to preserve his just relations, and not touch them, or cause the violation of their faith to him : in reference to the eighth, it is to preserve his estate, and not meddle with his goods : the ninth requires that we preserve his good name, and not defame him, nor do any prejudice to his credit, no more than we would to his estate : and by virtue of the tenth, we are to moderate our very desires, so as not to envy him that which is his, nor to long to have it in our possession : To be sure there is righteousness to be looked after in words and expressions, as well as in deeds and actions. But alas ! How doth the sin of lying abound among us ? (And no wonder, when perjury is so common a sin) *For this God hath a controversy with the land.* Is there not need to *take heed every one of his neighbour, and not to trust in any brother ? will not every one deceive his neighbour, and not speak the truth ? Have not they taught their tongue to speak lies ?* If you are not cozening-liars, or false-witness liars, yet are you not reviling-liars ? Do you not upon every petty difference speak of one another ye care not what ? Do ye not spread lying defamations ? *I heard the defaming of many ——— report say they, and we will*

report. Is not the fawning-liar common among us? Their words are the words of Jacob, but their hands are the hands of Esau. *The words of their mouths are smoother than butter, but war is in their hearts : their words are softer than oil, yet are they drawn swords : there is no faithfulness in their mouth, their throat is an open sepulchre.* Upon this occasion give me leave to use David's prayer, *Help Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men.* Why, wherein consists their ungodliness? *they speak vanity every one with his neighbour : with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak.* Is there not also many a news-telling liar among us? They believe in their consciences, that it is false, what they relate ; and yet, to promote an interest, or to make hearts glad with lies, they will spread that which is false. How many officious liars have we, who tell lies for some good end (as they think ?) The highest end is God's glory ; but *will ye speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him ?* The vulgate reads the text, *Numquid Deus indiges vestro mendacio ?* It contains a truth, though not the sense of the place : *What ! hath God need of your lie ?* It is a dishonour to God to be thus helped. And if we must not speak evil that good may come to God, sure then we may not (whatever the Roman doctors teach us) *speaking evil, that good may come to ourselves.*

How can you think you are God's children? God engageth himself for his people, that *surely they will not lie, surely they are my people, children that will not lie.* Austin long ago gave his judgment concerning lying, that "a man must not tell a lie to save the whole world : if it were (saith he) to save thy father or thy mother out of hell, if possibly it could be, thou must not tell a lie, or if it were to save a kingdom from destruc-

tion :” and yet to gain a little mirth, or to gain a penny, or to prevent the frowns of a superior, how do some teach their tongues to lie? Not considering, that among the seven things that are an *abomination to the Lord*, lying, is one, yea, (as one observes) he repeats lying twice, though under several names : that *all liars shall have their portion in the burning lake* : that herein *they are like unto the devil, who is the father of lies, and most unlike unto God, who cannot lie*. O then, *put away lying and speak the truth* ; away with mental reservations, and jesuitical equivocations. Let thy tongue be the faithful interpreter of thy heart. Be faithful in your promises and engagements, be not *yea and nay*. Remember Cicero the heathen’s saying : “None but the most villanous will deceive him, who had been safe, if he had not trusted.”

CHAP. XXVI.

The Covetousness of Professors.

IF there be so much unrighteousness, no wonder that there is also much covetousness, that must not be forgot, when we remember the evil of our ways. Covetousness is the seed of all unrighteousness, *the root of all evil*. It was Jezebel’s covetousness that made her unjustly deprive Naboth of his vineyard. *This is the heir, come let us kill him, and seize on his inheritance. Flictere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.* i.e. If I cannot prevail with heaven, I will to hell, for an estate is the voice of covetousness : yea, (which is more sadly to be considered) this is that which will put men, not only upon injus-

tice to others, but to God himself; it will make them offer violence to religion, to divine honour, and whatever is sacred in the world, all these shall be prostituted to serve the ends of covetousness. That man will stick at no abuse of God, whose god is his gain. How notorious was that of one of the holy fathers of Rome, a pope, *O quantas divitias peperit hæc fabula Christi!* i. e. O how gainful unto us hath been the fable of Christ? And is not covetousness and earthly-mindedness an epidemical sin? Solomon calls it an *evil disease*. It is called by one Aurugo, the yellow jaundice, which makes the sick person look yellow all over. This is the grave which never saith, *it is enough*, but like Solomon's horseleech *it cries give, give*. O! what boundless appetites have many, who can neither use what they have, nor put a period to what they desire: as in the sea one wave riseth above another, so here every desire of having is outgone by a new desire of getting.

Are not your great cares for riches? Do not your thoughts thus run out, O! how shall I thrive more in the world, get more estate, custom? but not, O! how shall I get the favour of God, the pardon of my sins, and victory over my lusts? How anxious and solicitous are you every day for the world, but how flat in your coming to have the image of God renewed? How dejected are you when you miss of a good bargain? or when you meet with some loss by sea or land? But how little troubled if you lose an opportunity of communion with the Lord? How joyous are you when a little of the world comes in? but how little pleased with the *galleries wherein the beloved may be held*? How are men pleased with the earth, but find no more relish in Christ and his ways, than in the white of an egg? What great journeys have you taken,

even compassed sea and land, to gain riches ? and hardly can go a mile or two to meet with God ? How is every opportunity laid hold of to get more to the heap ? But do not you remain contented, with the least measures of grace, yea with somewhat below grace ? How oft have you left your meat to serve a customer ? but when so, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ ? How few design for riches, as a means to carry them to a farther end ? They should be but as the rounds of a ladder, not to stand upon, but thereby to ascend higher, even to glory, and to the New Jerusalem : But alas ! few desire the world in subordination to God, and as a means to glorify God ; but the more they love the world, the less God is loved ; and the more their desires are carried out after riches, the less after God. How few pursue earthly things in obedience to God's call ? How many out of a desire of filthy lucre ? How few seek the world with an holy indifferency ? How few reserve their zeal, and hottest endeavours, for heavenly things ? Is not the general cry, *Who will show us any good ?* We need no proof of this, there are instances every where. How, for the getting of a penny, will some debar themselves of ordinances ? Is it not a sufficient excuse with some, for not attending on the worship of God, that they met with a customer, that kept them from the ordinance ? Doth not the clock strike too fast while thou art selling to advantage ? Doth not time run away too fast ? Dost thou not wish thou couldst with Joshua cause the *sun to stand still* on a market-day, or on a fair-day, when trading is quick ? But O ! the sexton is blamed for suffering the clock to stand still on a sabbath day, and when thou art in the worship of God, O ! *When will the sabbath be gone ?* When will the duty be over, that we may sell ? How many hypocritical outcries are there against the world ? O ! it eats up my

time : O ! it eats up my spirits, it robs me of communion with God : we say it is an enemy, and yet we can bosom this snake, lodge this enemy, that God would have us to kill. Mortify covetousness.

How oft hath God charged thee against covetousness ? *Take heed, and beware of it* : two words to the same purpose, all little enough to take thee off from earthly pursuits. How apparently hath God withdrawn from thee, ever since thou wast taken with this Delilah ? How hardly art thou pulled out of the deep pit, and miry clay, to duty, much more to God ? And wilt thou be rich ? Art thou resolved to run into the briars ? Then farewell to thee, not only in time, but to eternity. How many convictions and impressions of the blessed Spirit have your wordly cares choaked ? How have your inordinate desires of riches puzzled your souls, and diverted them from minding and improving the counsels of God and conscience ? But O ! How unreasonable are earthly prosecutions in this day of God's wrath ; when God is plucking up by the roots, now to be seeking great things for ourselves, to have Baruch's sore running on us, this makes us the more inexcusable sinners. This is altogether unseasonable, this is no time for it, this is ignoble, yea, base. O that we were ashamed of it ! We say the last days are perilous days ; we pretend to expect the cross, and is this good preparation for the cross of Christ, to load ourselves with thick clay, to crack our consciences, and thereby to incur God's farther displeasure ? How unlike art thou to the primitive converts ? Paul, when converted, *counts all things but dung in comparison of Christ*. And Zaccheus no sooner had a work of grace begun upon him, but down went the world, faster than ever it went up : he parts from riches with more

freedom than he sought them: *The half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man, I will restore fourfold.* John, the beloved disciple, affirms, that there is an inconsistency between loving the *Father* and the *world*: and that *whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world*: but alas! Our hearts are as cities without walls, the world hath a thoroughfare in them, and may come and go without any pass from heaven. How hath God put a remark of his sore displeasure upon our worldly endeavours? In order to dwell in our *ceiled houses*, we have neglected God's house, and said, *The time is not come for the building of the waste places*, for the restoring the worship of God, for the building of the house of God; and how hath God caused many of us to vomit up our sweet morsels; which we rolled under our tongues? O! *Consider your ways: Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.* How hath this sin deadened you to all the worship of God? How, by the interposition of this dark body of the earth, hath the light of heaven, yea, the light of God's countenance, been darkened? and how hath thy soul been benighted and clouded? They say, if a knife be put into the earth, it will lose its edge: I am sure of this experiment, that Christians, who were once lively and active for God, yet by engaging their hearts to the world, they have lost their zeal, their keenness, and their lustre, which once they had. When thou hast gained time from thy business to think of God, and to discharge duty, hast not thou missed thine heart? hast thou not left and lost it in the crowd? How dost thou debase thyself hereby? The curse of Ham is upon thee, *a servant of servants thou art*, a slave to that which thou

shouldest rule over : God did not give thee a reasonable soul, that thou shouldest chuse the serpent's curse, to crawl and live upon the earth. O, what sordid practices have some stooped unto, for the getting of this world's riches? Ahab, to gain a few handfuls of earth, dares walk to it through Naboth's bowels. Judas to pocket thirty pieces, will venture to betray his Lord, and the Lord of heaven and earth. O tremble to think what sad effects your covetousness may have upon you before you die. Demas left Christ, lost his soul, shipwrecked his faith, and all to embrace this present evil world. And if thou make haste to be rich, shalt thou be innocent? Whether thou place thy confidence and hope in thy gold, or in a golden calf, thou art guilty of idolatry, of having other gods, besides the true God, and so dost as highly offend the true God : and God usually gives up such men unto *spiritual judgments*. It makes me fear *you have not tasted of the upper springs*, because the puddle of the world is still sweet to your taste.

No man (saith Christ) *having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new, for he saith the old is better*. If you had tasted of the joy, peace, mercy, and comforts of Christ, your earthly comforts would be disrelished : If you did *glory in the cross of Christ, the world would be crucified to you, and you unto the world*. The sweetness of Christ would drown all creature sweetness. But alas ! To which of us, *is one day in God's courts better than a thousand elsewhere?* Austin said, *If one drop of the joys of heaven might fall into hell, it would drown all the bitterness of hell* : so would it drown all the bitterness of the soul, and all the sweetness in the world. Worldly comforts would be too coarse, too flat, to recreate your hearts. Did ye but know the honey and milk of Canaan, ye would not so

much mind the *onions of Egypt*. No man can serve two masters ; for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or he will cleave to the one, and despise the other : ye cannot serve God and Mammon. O, What a surpassing indignity is this to Christ, to set him below the footstool, to value thirty pieces of silver before him, to prefer earth before heaven, present things before future ; that the love of God, the recompence of reward, shall not lie nearer the heart, than the treasures of Egypt ? O, what a miserable life dost thou live ? This sin brings an hell with it : thou art the devil's martyr. *They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* Thou enjoyest neither God, nor the world ; Thy only happiness is a fancy : and this is thy great misery, that thou still desirest that which will never satisfy thy desires : The more thou hast of the world, the more thou wantest : the more thou drinkest, the more thou thirstest : a dropsy is upon thee, and thou knowest it not. Discontent is always the companion of covetousness. *Let your conversation be without covetousness : and be content with such things as you have. Why wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not ?* Grace and godliness is substance : Why, with Æsop's dog, wilt thou let go the substance for a shadow ? The things of the world are fancies, the things of God realities. *What good is there to the owners of riches, saving the beholding of them with their eyes ?* Do not you all this while bear false witness against God ? Do not you proclaim to the world, that God is not enough to answer, to fill your desires, and that therefore you go out after the creature ? Is it nothing to you, to call God, who is all sufficient, who is a fountain of living water, a barren wilderness ? *Be astonished,*

O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord ; for my people have committed two evils ; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. O generation, see ye the word of the Lord ; have I been a wilderness unto Israel ? a land of darkness ? Wherefore say my people, We are Lord's, we will come no more unto thee ? Hereby you break the conjugal relation : God looks on you as adulterers and adulteresses, and will judge you accordingly. God expects that *his breasts should satisfy you*, and that you be *always ravished with his love* : and dare you tell the world, that your God hath deceived you ? and that you were mistaken in your choice of God ? and therefore after other lovers you will go ? No wonder, that for *the iniquity of our covetousness, God be wroth and smite us*. We are greedy of more, but *what have we done with our former talents ?* Account we must for *one*, for *two*, for *ten* talents : the more we have, the greater still will be our account.

There is a reckoning day at hand. O that our *moderation were known to all men*, because *the Lord is at hand*. If thou art not sincere, I am as sure as this book is in thy hand, thou wilt curse the time that ever thou hadst an estate, and wilt wish thou hadst been a beggar, for then thou hadst not so much to answer for before God. *It is certain* (though some doubt it) *that thou shalt carry none of thy estate away with thee* ; nothing is to be carried away, save guilt to hell, in case of misimprovement of an estate : yea, if you have not rendered unto God *according to what you have received*, the heaping up of wealth, is but the charging of thy account : thou must account, how thou hast disbursed to a farthing. I will suppose thou hast (by neg-

lects of thy general calling, and by rising up early and sitting up late) gained an estate, *thou mayest put all thy gain in thine eyes, and never see the worse.* What will thy estate advantage thee, when the arrows of the Lord enter into thy soul? What will the world advantage thee, when the gout, fever, burning pestilence, &c. are upon thee? What, hast thou got only that which may stand with God's eternal hatred? Never count thy gains, till thou hast got that which is inconsistent with God's wrath. What hast thou got, above that which God throweth unto the dogs; show me childrens' bread, or never boast of thy gains. Did you ever find any child of God worse for afflictions? but *have you not found many worse for their thrivings in the world? Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked.* Whilst you have bonds and bills upon others, do not you run into arrears unto God? And how will you discharge those suits, which God will commence against you? When you lie dying, will ye not wish, that your time, your strength, your spirits, had been poured forth upon better things, than those of this life? That you had traded for grace and glory, rather than for the gold of Ophir, for a little gilt clay? O ye great projectors for the world, I do even foresee the troubles and horrors, the doubts and fears, the anguish and amazements of your souls, which your uncertainties, as to your future estate, will put you into, in your dying rooms.

How will you take up such language as this; "Fool that I was to cumber myself about many things, and neglect the one thing necessary! Fool that I was, to set my thoughts and affections on things below, (none of which now give me a drop of water to cool my tongue) and to neglect the things above! O, If I had never heard of Christ and glory, I had been more ex-

cusable for my earthly prolings. O, *how have I disquieted myself in vain ? I have heaped up riches, and know not who shall gather them.* Had I been as faithful to Christ, as I was to Mammon, O, with what joy might I have removed hence ? *What abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom might I have had ?* O, labour to prevent the horrors of death, and the gnawing worm of conscience. It is sad, when the sting of death, and the worm of conscience, *bite the man together.* *Riches avail not in the day of wrath : but righteousness delivereth from death.* Believe it, it will cut you to the heart, to think, that less pains might have served for eternal life, than you have bestowed for temporal goods. This plague attends the covetous man, the more he desires, and heaps up, the less he is desired and the less he is lamented when he dies. He is like a swine, that is good for nothing whilst he is alive ; nor good to bear and carry, as the horse ; nor to draw, as the ox ; nor to clothe, as the sheep ; nor to give milk, as the cow ; nor to keep the house, as the dog ; but *ad solam mortem nutritur* fed only to the slaughter : So the covetous man doth no good with his riches whilst he liveth ; but when he is dead, his riches come to be disposed of. *The riches of a sinner are laid up for the just.* How can you choose but tremble at doomsday ? You cannot desire the coming of Christ : If the church cries, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly,* you cannot join in that prayer, for that your hearts are glued to this present world : you prefer Paris before paradise. It is to the saint's loss to be kept so long from heaven : but you count it not so. You cannot say, *Thy kingdom come.* What will you do in that day, when all the estate and friends of Dives, cannot relieve with a drop of cold water ? Riches are like briars and thorns, good to stop gaps,

but not to lay in our beds, and set our hearts upon, lest we *lie down in sorrow*. Few remember the devil's offer, (*All these things will I give thee*, is the last temptation that old professors are baited with.) *Take heed therefore and beware of covetousness.*

CHAP. XXVII.

The Envy occuring in Professors.

ENVY is a sin seldom confessed, but yet much diffused among professors. *The spirit that dwelleth in us, lusteth to envy.* And indeed covetousness and envy are never asunder: they are sins against the same command: such as long, that what is their neighbour's, should be their's, envy to him, that which is his: and such as envy to him that which is his, long to have it to be theirs. How desirous are professors to grasp all to themselves? And therefore how apt are the very best to be envious at the power, greatness, riches, if not goodness of others? Doth not the experience that you have of your own hearts (if you be not strangers at home) testify, that this spirit is stirring and acting in you? The poor envy the rich, the base the honourable, as if they had the less, because others have so much. Some think that this was the sin that threw down the angels from heaven, that they envied Adam's glory, in that he was made after God's image, and that they relinquished their glory to divest Adam of his: to be sure the devil was restless, till he had plunged Adam in the same sin and misery, that he was brought into. Sure, malignity, the pros-

perity of others, is not from the Spirit of God. He that giveth freely to all, would not have us to envy those, to whom he gives more freely, than to ourselves, and he that giveth us more, doth not envy us for what we have. If you have not so much as others, it is because you are unfit to receive, not because God is unwilling to give. Do not we see how this poison diffuseth itself? An early sin it was, if not in the angels, (as some think) yet it was in Eve: she envied the all-knowledge of God, and must forsooth have at least an equality with God himself: it was also strong in the first man, that was born of a woman: and we still suck it with our mother's milk, and it seldom dies till we die. This sin is commonly among people of the same profession: one mechanic, one merchant envies another: one scholar another, one gentleman another, one commander another, as Saul envied and hated David, because the women sang, that *Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands*, one minister another, as those in Paul's days, that envied him, and affected an high strain of eloquence; on purpose to obscure that reputation which Paul had got among the churches. And happy had it been, if this cursed sin had died in that age, but it hath been still working in all ages of the world.

Is there not a greater promptitude in us, to detract from men's worth, than to credit and exalt them? To write down their blots and imperfections, than to set forth their due virtues and graces? If we cannot reach others by imitation, we will by calumny; and therefore Luther saith, "Envious men feed upon the dung of other men: they are like flies, that love to be upon sores." It is admirable to see, how dull-sighted we are, as to the virtues and graces of our brethren, but quick-sighted as eagles to dis-

cern their imperfections : The beams of virtue are not seen, i. e. not taken notice of, but a mote in a brother's eye is soon espied.

Are we not more eager to receive and spread any thing, whereby our neighbour is infamed and obscured, than we are to entertain and diffuse what tends to his praise and glory ? And is not this the reason hereof, viz. the great desire we have to shine alone, and that we would have none to vie with us in glory, much less to excel us therein ?

Is there not (ofttimes) a secret gladness in our hearts, when some sad providences afflict others, in their names, goods, health, and relations, that thereby they may be brought on a level with us, or to an inferiority, in a lower estate ? When you have seen some congregations wedged in with a concourse of hearers, and yours thin and naked ; and when some have been cried up for their purity, gravity, activity, and zeal ; and when others have enlarged their parts, or estates, and yours rather have been impaired, have ye not been ready even to burst with envy ? Have you not been glad, when some blot hath attended these, whereby they have fallen into that esteem, which once they had above you ?

There is no envy in God, and his holy angels : they rejoice at our advancement, and at the glory of human nature, that it is so exalted above theirs ; but unhappy we ! that cannot see any excellency in another, but we dislike our enjoyments, and are more vexed at the welfare of our neighbours, than we would be at our own calamities.

The beasts do not envy one another, but men do : yea, the devils envy not one another : some professors are herein worse than devils. No wonder if there have been *hatred, variance, emu-*

*lations, wrath, strife, seditions, and heresies, while envyings have abounded amongst us. You know the miserable effect of envy in the first man, that was born of a woman : through envy Cain hated, and then killed his brother Abel. Wrath is cruel, and anger outrageous, but who is able to stand before envy ? This is so filthy, so shameful a sin, that few will own it : observe the confessions of men in prayer, and conference, and you will hardly find a professor acknowledge envy. The malignity of this sin appears, in that, it strikes directly at the providence of God, who disposeth of the inequality of men's conditions, according to his sovereignty and wisdom : it hath a tacit accusation of God, for raising up some so high, and laying others so low : it is deeply unsatisfied with God's bounty to the children of men, that he gives so liberally to some, whereas he is not bound to any. While others complain against God for making the world no better, the envious man is troubled that he hath done so well, for some of his creatures. No wonder the apostle reckoneth envy among the gross sins of *murder, uncleanness, idolatry, witchcraft, &c.* and concludes, *heaven is no place for such. They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* This is a sin so damnable, and so ugly, making you so much like the devil, that it is high time you watch against it, mourn for it, and seek its ruin:*

O ! When shall we hear the exhortation, "*Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another ?* When shall we in honour prefer one another ? When shall we, like Barnabas, *When we saw the grace of God rejoice ?* When shall ministers reprove the Joshuas, that are envying for their sakes, in Moses' words, *I would to God all the people of the Lord did prophesy ?* When shall we like

John the Baptist, be contented to *decrease*, so that Christ may *increase*? and to be laid by, if others more able may be substituted to do God's work? When shall we rejoice if God useth others to convert by them, more than by us? and with famous Mr. Dod, I would to God (saith he) that I were the worst minister in England: his meaning was, that all should excel him in gifts and graces. We pretend to evidences of our conversion from our love to the saints, but let us hear what the effects of true love are: *Love seeketh not her own, love envieth not, love is not puffed up.* As *love* is the *fulfilling of the law*, so *envy* is the *dissolution of it*. O! when shall we, instead of envying our brother, bless God for him? If he hath more than we have, more strength, parts, riches, honours, graces, &c. the account he must pass with God is the greater: let us pity him rather than envy him: believe it, God is wiser than we are, and if his distributions are various, we have as many talents as we can well improve. Let us look to our own duty in the places wherein God hath set us: and pray for them, that have ten talents more than we have, that they may serve the Lord ten times more than we can. O that thine eye might affect thine heart, that thine *eye* should be *evil*, because *God's is good*."

CHAP. XXVIII.

The Sins of Family-Governors.

1. **H**OW guilty are such of you, as have families to govern, of not commanding your household to serve God! O how few can God say, as he did

of Abraham by way of approbation, *I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.* By your authority you should command them to subject their hearts, wills, and consciences, to the will and pleasure of Jehovah : but alas ! how many of you have been careless in this ? your children and servants, yea wives, must know your authority upon worldly accounts, you command them (imperiously enough) to fulfil your will and pleasure, to serve you : but how Gallio-like are you, little caring whether they obey the Lord ?

2. How much passion have you discovered when children, and servants, yea and wives too, submit not to your will and pleasure ? But when do they see so much zeal against their neglect of God's work, as they find in you, when they neglect your secular commands ? These passions are of a scandalous nature, and may make your inferiors to believe, that you value more your authority, than God's, the having your own will to be obeyed, than that God's requests should be observed.

3. How many professing-governors are there, that shew great care for the bodies of their families, but not for their souls ? Meat, and drink, and clothes, or money to buy them, they shall have, but none, or little instruction.

How little do you catechise your families ? How seldom do you ask them any questions concerning the *first principles of the doctrine of Christ* ? If you do catechise your children, as you ought, in obedience to those divine commands : *Train up a child in the way he should go. Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* ; Yet how few of you do catechise the rest of your household, your

servants and wives, though they be but babes in religion, *children in understanding*, and this milk is appointed for children in understanding as well as age? Neither doth the work of catechising them, belong only unto ministers (to them indeed it doth belong as such as *watch for their souls*) but unto you: for it belongs to all that have the charge of souls, and you are charged not only with your children's, but with your servants, and with your wives' souls. Whatever any of you may fancy, there never comes a wife, a child, or a servant into any of your families, but with this warrant from the great Lord of heaven and earth; keep the soul of this wife, this child, this servant; for if it be missing amongst the number of my sheep at the great day through thy neglect in instructing, &c. thy soul shall go for it. Hence not only should your children be taught by you, but your wives and servants. The wife is commanded to *learn of her husband at home*, and the husband to *walk with her as a man of knowledge*: and your servants shall be trained by you in religion, as Abraham's servants were by Abraham, thus some of the Hebrew Rabbins think that Abraham's trained servants are therefore so called.

How seldom do you converse personally with every one in your families concerning the practical part of religion: How seldom do you ask them any questions, how it is with their souls? and what they think will become of them to all eternity? Are you not as great strangers to the inwards of their souls, as you are to the souls of the Indians? If their bodies be in danger, meat, physick, attendance, are procured; but their souls may perish in formality and carelessness for any help you will afford them. Some professing governors never treat with their households about their spiritual estate from one year to another: hence comes the great apostacy of

our times. The Lord humble us and deliver us from blood-guiltiness. Many an husband may cry out, "O, my wife's soul is like to perish, through my default:" many a parent may shriek, "O, I am very guilty of the blood of my child:" and many a master may impute to his own account all the disorders of his servants; for that they have no personal conference with them about original corruption, regeneration, justification, sanctification, glorification, &c. Perhaps thou prayest in thy family every day, but not knowing the inward lusts and workings of their hearts towards God or sin, thou knowest not how to pray as thou oughtest: thou knowest not what to confess, and what to pray for, nor what to bless God for.

4. Have you walked with that gravity before your wives, children and servants, as ye ought? Have you not made yourselves vile by lightness, frothiness, and unseemly carriages? Governors of families are the viceroys of God: they are in the place of God; and therefore should keep up their authority, and not sinfully run into such vanity and familiarity with their inferiors, as to breed in them contempt of the ordinance of God.

5. You have given your children and servants time to work for yourselves, but have you afforded them time to serve their God in? Too many use their inferiors, just as they use their beasts; they work and feed their beasts, but never instruct: no more do they instruct their inferiors. When do you call your wives, children, servants, into your closet, and not only press them to look after their souls, and in order thereunto, to spend some time in prayer, reading, meditation, &c. but tell them how God wrought on you, how he awakened you, what corruptions prevailed with you, and how God helped you to crucify them: How do you know, but the same

motives might melt, reduce, and turn their hearts too.

6. Have not you miscarried, as to the time, for the management of your religious work, in your houses? Some governors pray in the morning too early: so early, with a small part of their family, whilst others are in bed, or in the service of the world, so that they worship not God together, as they ought: and this is past over with silence; but if they miss of their servant in the shop or field, O! how doth the fire of hell break forth at their lips? How angry is the governor? he cries out, O! I shall be undone by the unfaithfulness of my wife, children, servants; but sees not a greater danger, a more probable ruin falling on him for not having his family to worship God with him.

Others defer morning prayer till it be almost noon. They will adventure into all worldly employments, (as we say) without fear or wit: they see no need of God to protect them from outward or inward dangers, no need of God's blessing, till they are ready to fill their paunch, and then some collects must be said, some short prayers; it is the custom of their forefathers, it is the religion of their ancestors, or conscience will trouble at the total neglect of the morning sacrifice, and therefore the prayer shall be run over with more haste, than the boy that saith his lesson; that they may rise up to eat, drink, and play.

And as some are unseasonable in their duties in the morning, so at evening. Whilst their strength lasts to serve the world, they attend it, some till even midnight, and then; come let us go to prayer; when the poor wife, children, and servants, had rather be in bed, than on their knees. The governor prays dully enough, and that while the poor family sleep, or nauseate the

duty ; and so like Eli's sons, these sons of Belial *cause their people to abhor the offering of the Lord.*

Are there not also some professing governors (unworthy the name of Christian) who think to please God and the family with a long grace before meat, which shall be in lieu of all the service of the day ?

7. How few are there that read the scriptures and good books in their houses ? O ! this will take up too much time ; as if God had given men all their time to neglect him in, and to indulge to the services of the flesh, world, and devils.

CHAP. XXIX.

The Sins of Husbands and Wives.

HUSBANDS and wives are called to reflection on their miscarriages, jointly and severally.

Jointly, for their not being so careful of their choice, as they should have been : not seeking God enough in a matter of so great consequence, which was for term of life, and wherein the souls of each other were so highly concerned. *The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth ; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what communion hath light with darkness ? That they came together upon low, earthly, and sensual motives, for profit, pleasure, beauty, rather than to further the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair ; and they took them wives of all which they chose. That they did not by prayer*

and fasting try to live unmarried, though the apostle told them of the advantages of serving Christ thereby. *He that is unmarried, careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord.*

Severally : Husbands, ye have not loved your wives, as Christ the church ; though the command be express, *Husbands love your wives. even as Christ also loved the church*, Christ is faithful to his spouse. I will abide for thee. *Thou shalt abide for me many days, thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee.* But though you have not been adulterers in any gross act, yet how oft have you wished the bond of marriage were broken ? and have not you had eyes full of adultery ? Hath not your love to others degenerated into secret lust ? Christ is patient to his church, but hath your love suffered all things ? upon light matters, what frowns, I will not say, what blows ? Hath not family prayer been neglected through your wrath ? Christ gives no occasion of jealousy ; but have not some of you ? The Lord searcheth hearts. Christ's love is bountiful ; how short have you kept your wives, contrary to your engagements to endow them with all your worldly goods ? Christ keeps company with the wife of his bosom ; but have not some of you been more abroad than at home ? Christ edifieth his church : Do ye dwell with your wives as men of knowledge ? Christ doth communicate secrets to his spouse, are not ye strangers to the hearts, though perhaps not to the bosoms, of your nearest relations ? Christ doth confer often with his church about the mysteries of God : I wish you did so. I fear some of you are silver-tongued abroad, to get you a name, forward to speak of

Christ, but dumb at home even to your wives as well as children. The woman learns not, though she ask her husband at home. Christ gives the sharpest rebukes to his offending spouse privately, and when he gets her alone; but do not you reprove before servants and children? Hereby they learn frowardness, when brought into this relation, and at present slight the wives of your bosoms. Christ doth not blaze his wife's infirmities; but so have ye. Christ puts the best construction on what his spouse doth. *The spirit is willing, though the flesh be weak.* But do not you put the worst? When your lusts are quenched, your love is gone. Christ doth pity his church as the weaker vessel; if ye did so, the family would be the better governed. Christ doth sympathize with his church: *In all her afflictions he is afflicted;* but how fretful, churlish, and Nabal-like are you, when the hand of God is heavy on your nearest relations? Christ doth vindicate his spouse, and is greatly displeased when she suffers from the world; but cannot some of you help to deride your wives? and not frown when they are wronged and abused. Christ doth not upbraid his spouse with her low condition before he put honour on her: but alas! How oft have ye cast into the dish what the condition of your wives was before you cast your eyes upon them? Christ gave his life for his church: what hast thou done and suffered to save the soul of thy wife? Christ rules his church, not with a rod of iron, but with a sceptre of love: is your dominion exercised with discretion and love? Are all things done in charity? *Is she to thee as a loving hind or roe?* Christ doth not count his spouse as a servant, but a friend; he doth not domineer over his church, but hath high thoughts of her; but how many husbands use their wives hardly

better than servants? Christ notwithstanding keeps up his authority over his church, but do not many husbands lose it through too much uxoriousness, and make themselves contemptible, by yielding to their wives, as Adam to his, whence came at first all sin, disorder, and misery into the world? How did Solomon fall? Christ yields to many of his wives' petitions and suits to him: but many are worse than the heathen was to his wife, he said unto her, *What wilt thou queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.* The poor wife must use the mediation of others to have her desires accomplished. When Christ doth command his wife, his church, he doth it mildly: *we pray you in Christ's stead.* But many husbands imperiously enough, too much, God knoweth, when for love's sake they should rather intreat. Christ doth love his spouse, though he gain nothing by her; but alas! how many are severe enough to their wives, when they fail of that estate, &c. that they expected from them?

As husbands fail, so do wives; even as the church is subject unto Christ, so should ye have been to your own husbands in every thing. But have ye affronted your light? The true church of Christ loves him inwardly, as well as outwardly; so should ye have loved your husbands; but alas! how little have ye shewed the union betwixt the church and Christ by your affections? The church loves Christ more than angels: *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* But how many wives are commending others' husbands more than their own? If my husband were thus, and thus, &c. Thy husband should be to thee the most precious of all persons, the most lovely in thine eyes. Not parts and gifts,

but the good pleasure of God, should be the ground of this special love. The church honours Christ above all other persons in the world ; but have not some of you mean, low, and base thoughts of your husbands ? The church is subject to Christ in all things ; but will not some of you wear what you please, go where you please, eat what you please, and employ yourselves in what you please ? Yea, though contrary to your husband's just commands, and meek entreaties ? The church fears Christ : so should wives, I say not either should, with a slavish, but both should, with a reverential fear. Remember Michal, *She despised her husband in her heart*, (She did not express her slighting of him, as many do, in words) and she had no child unto the day of her death. God took the husband's part, and put a mark of displeasure upon that her sauciness. For slighting the ordinance of God, her head, (though but in her heart) God plagued her in her womb with barrenness. The church loves Christ more and more : but O the decays of womens' affections to their husbands ! Partly through levity, and partly through age, and partly through cross providences ! Whereas thou shouldest have *kept the covenant of thy God*. The church doth commend Christ ; but seldom are wives careful herein, to imitate the church of God. How many do blazon their infirmities more frequently, than commend their graces ? The church is careful to please Christ in all things : *The married woman should care (study) to please her husband*, by her attire, behaviour, words ; she should go, speak, and do so, as may render her most acceptable in his sight in every thing. How many cross wives are there, that love to vex, rather than to delight their husbands ? They will clothe and adorn their bodies, to make

them lovely to strangers, rather than to their own husbands. The church bears patiently rebukes and blows from Christ : so should wives : as Sarah was commended for her meekness. *The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, is in the sight of God, of great price ; for after this manner, in the old time, the holy women adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands, even as Sarah, &c.* The church gives Christ reverend titles of honour and esteem : but alas ! wives are so proud, so self-conceited of their own worth and merit, that they cannot but disrespect all others, even their own husbands. Hereby they shew not themselves to be the daughters of Sarah ; she having occasion to think of her husband, presently this title, lord, came out of her heart into her mouth : and the Holy Ghost takes notice of it : yea, a second time, sure it was for some high end ; and proves that she obeyed Abraham, *because she called him lord.* Perhaps the wife will tell me, “ these are but trifles that I cross my husband in : ” I must tell thee, to break the order of God for toys and trifles will augment thy sin at the day of accounts. What wilt thou, darest thou for so slender a matter tread down the law of thy God, and hazard the ruin of thy soul ? O consider this, and turn not your duties to your husbands into matter of talk and pastime, as the manner of most women is.

CHAP. XXX.

The Miscarriages of professing Parents, and their Children.

PARENTS, O! how little do you contrive for the good of future generations! How little do you care whether God hath a name when you be dead and gone, that Christ survive, and holiness flourish, when you shall be rotten in your graves! O! it is through your default that the name of Christ is not had in everlasting remembrance: if you were faithful, how would the *generations to come bless the Lord* in your behalf? If you were active and diligent, you might convey holiness down to your posterity, as you have been unhappy instruments to convey down a stock of sin, you have been instruments to convey down the curse; but are not you careless to convey down grace? The world would soon mend, the church of Christ would soon regain its ancient lustre and beauty, if ye did but faithfully discharge your duties to your children: you might *suffer little children to come to Christ*, yea, you might fill the kingdom of heaven; but do not you rather fill the kingdom of hell? And as *Jeroboam made Israel to sin*, do not you, instead of leading them the way to heaven, lead them the way to hell? O! consider seriously and sadly how far you are guilty with respect to the souls of your children.

1. By giving them bad examples. Ham's not covering his father's nakedness was a sin conveyed down to all his race, and therefore

God chargeth the church of the Jews against that sin, under the expressions of *walking in the manners of the nations*. *Ye shall not walk in the manners of the nations; which I cast out before you; for they committed all these things*. Your pride, sensuality, carelessness in the worship of God, your passions towards your wives, and wives towards their husbands, your frowardness toward servants, &c. teach your children so to carry themselves towards others. One checked his son, and said, never parent had so wicked a child; yes (said the son) my grandfather had.

2. By humouring and indulging your children in their sins: teaching them early to be proud of their fine clothes; and to revenge, "Come, give me a blow," saith the mother to the child; whilst it sits on her lap. By indulging his voluptuous course of life, it is thought Isaac smarted in his son's future disobedience, even by suffering him to sport and hunt away too much of precious time. Many, like apes, kill their children with culling them. Austin tells a sad story of one Cyrillus, who loved an only son immoderately, and let him do (without correction) what he would: afterwards this spoiled son, in a fit of drunkenness, offers violence to his mother, killed his father, wounded mortally two of his sisters, and would have ravished another. Through foolish pity, parents, especially mothers, give the reins unto their children, when they are young, and thereby they grow headstrong, and are *a shame to the mother that bore them*. The sparing of the rod is the ruin of the child. Do not you reprove your children, as old fond Eli did? Thereby he brought a plague upon himself and upon his posterity. What saith one? never cease convincing or correcting till thou hast subdued the spirit of thy child, if he contends with thee. You pretend

such harshness is inconsistent with love ; but I say from the Lord, such fondness and indulgence is consistent with hatred ; and I am sure the Lord is on my side, in this. *He that spareth his rod hateth his son, he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.* Is it love to suffer a wound in thy child to fester (and thereby to destroy him) rather than to apply a painful corrosive for the expediting the cure ? But what saith the fond mother ? O ! If the child should be the worse for my correction, it would be a trouble to me whilst I live. O that such a doting mother would hear the Lord himself ! *Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest, yea, he shall give delight to thy soul. Withhold not correction from the child : for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.*

3. By not acquainting them with the Lord, and his ways, and that betimes. Hath not God commanded, that his laws should be whetted by you, upon your children ? *Thou shalt teach them diligently* (Hebrew, whet or sharpen) *unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* Some conceive that catechising of children is not obscurely hinted in this ancient precept. Are not childhood and youth the time, wherein Solomon adviseth the children of men should be trained up *in the way wherein they should go* ? O parents ! If God be worth your own acquaintance, is he not worth the acquaintance of such as are so near and dear unto you ? Can you without trembling think, that as soon as death breaks up your house you may to heaven, and your children must to hell, and thither through your default ? But if you should die in

this neglect of instructing your children, you will be miserable as well as they : And O ! What a greeting will there be hereafter between ungodly parents and children ! What an hearing will it be to your tormented souls, to hear your children cry out against you, All this that we suffer was from you, you should have taught us better, and did not : What an addition will such outcries be to your misery ?

4. By not redressing the disorderly carriages of your children towards one another. How few Rebeccahs are there ? She was careful to remove jars and mischiefs that might arise between her two sons.

5. By not praying for your children's souls, and against those very particulars, which their natural constitution leads them mostly to.

6. By not correcting them aright : as to time, not early enough (he that loveth him correcteth him betimes) not while the fault is fresh in his thoughts, with all the aggravating circumstances thereof ; not, with compassion enough. You have reason (saith Mr. Dod) to be angry with yourselves, rather than to be bitter to your children ; for you correct your own sin in your children. If the child be curst and froward, hath he not seen his parent brawling and contentious, &c ? not ushering correction with prayer, that God would bless word and rod. Commonly parents correct in an high passion, whereby prayer is hindered, and the medicine becomes invalid.

7. By being angry without a cause, or above the desert. Anger must be shewn according to the nature of the offence. If parents be always chiding or correcting, they make their children resolute, like Hagar and Ishmael, to take up their heels, and into the wilderness will they, and where to be delivered from such hard usages. *Provoke not your children to wrath.* Some pa-

rents want natural affections : are too severe : correction like physic, will work no more with children, than our meat with us.

8. By loving your children more than God, loving them as they are yours, not as they are God's, as they bear your image, not that of God's, for their beauty and parts, rather than for their graces ; loving a beautiful child that is void of grace, more than a deformed child, though eminent in grace, loving one excessively, as Jacob, Joseph, hence Joseph is envied by the rest : prodigal favours to some, especially if without reason, are offensive to others, who are less respected : loving so, as loath to let them go when God calls for them, you cannot say as Eli, *it is the Lord, let him do as seems him good*. God pulls and you pull, and you quarrel with God about the gourd, and you think you *do well to be angry*. Job blessed God, when God took all away at once by one blow.

9. By not devoting them to some honest calling, but letting them live in idleness, and so they grow up monuments of your neglect. Some gentlemen train up their children to hold an hawk, to follow a dog, and commonly they die in an alehouse, or shorten their lives thereby. But if you do provide a calling for your children, is it not what is most gainful, rather than what will be most useful to the good of the soul ? Had you not rather have them rich factors among idolators (where they learn the manners of the heathens) rather than to have a meaner calling at home, where the gospel is preached in power and purity ?

10. By not matching them to godly persons, but rather to the rich : hereby ye shew that the silver shrines are in higher repute than grace and godliness.

11. By giving all to your children, though

the church of God hath more need of it. Hereby you evidence that you *prefer not Zion before your chiefest joy* : that you love the outward grandeur of your children more than the prosperity of the church. It is a wonder (saith Mr. Baxter) how so many seemingly holy, can quiet their consciences in such a sin as this is ? If one of you have two or three hundred pounds per annum, it is a wonder if you leave a hundred pounds a year of it to pious or charitable uses. Nay, do not parents leave all to their children, when they have apparent proofs that they will spend it in the service of hell ? O ! let parents tremble. What wilt thou enable and strengthen thy children to rebel against God ? put fuel to the fire ? put swords into their hands to fight against the Most High ?

“ Parents, I beseech you, look diligently to your duties, be humbled for these and such like miscarriages. O ! look about you, and you will see a sad apostacy in children ; parents civil, the children debauched : parents godly, the children formal or loose : parents eminent for grace, children notorious for lewdness. Let your bowels turn within you to see so great a degeneracy. Double your diligence, that there may be an holy seed : knock off the chains of hell from your children what you may : lay not out all your time how they may be rich. It is no time to seek great things for yourselves ; seek them not. Pity the souls of your children, that are slaves to the devil. How can ye mind your trades, fields, bodies, whilst the souls of your children are in danger of perishing ? How can ye see the devil driving your children to sin and hell, and ye stand still with a Gallio-spirit ? Go to your closets, and ask your hearts, whether the soul be not the principal part of the child ? and whether that needs not your care more than

the body ? Do not throw away the blade to preserve the scabbard. God hath set you to watch their souls, to train up their souls, to provide for their souls, if you do not, what is your love more than a Pagan's, a Turk's, towards your children ? You think you should be unnatural if you should not lay up for your children (though many professors upon pretence that God will provide, indulge to the flesh, pamper their bodies and starve their children) but here is the best laying up, to lay up a stock of prayers for them. and a stock of counsel and instruction in them. O parents ! once more I beseech you, put on bowels of pity and compassion. Pity the perishing souls of your own children : command your children to keep the way of the Lord, suffer them not to fashion themselves according to the course of the world. Connive not at their practising what you think is abominable in the worship of God. Remember they are God's children more than yours. *All souls are mine.* God claims a special right in them, *thy sons and thy daughters whom thou hast born unto me.* If you neglect your duties, you and your children are like to have sad greetings, when you meet before the Lord another day. How will your children lay their hells and torments at your doors ? how will they curse the day they were born of such fond women, who indulged them in their neglects of God ? Cursed be the day that ever I saw, the passions, the pride, the formality of my father, or of my mother ; for thereby I learned to sin against the Lord. O your examples undid me ! I had not come to this place of torment had it not been for you."

Children, are not you also greatly faulty towards your parents ? If children be richer than their parents, how irreverent are they ? how over familiar with their parents ? as if they had

forgot the *first commandment with promise*. How disobedient are they to their lawful commands? though the command of God be express, *Children obey your parents in all things*, and it is added, *for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.* Was Christ subject to his parents, and should not you be subject to yours? Surely you should have obeyed them as far as without sin, though their commands crossed your natural desires: as Joseph, when Israel said unto him, *Come I will send thee to thy brethren at Sechem*, though he knew he should be sent to them who hated him; yet he said unto his father, *Here am I*. How stout and rebellious are children when corrected? How few can say, *we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence?* This sin so provoked God, that he made it capital in the days of old. *If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold of him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and shall say, this our son is stubborn and rebellious, &c. and all the men of the city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.* How rebellious are children in refusing the callings which parents have appointed for them? If the parent be bound to bring them up to a calling, are not the children bound to attend that calling? *Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God.* Christ probably was brought up in his reputed father's

calling. *Is not this the carpenter?* How disobedient are professing children in their marriages? Children are the parent's goods, so God reckoneth them, yea, so the devil reckoneth them. When the devil had commission to meddle with Job's goods, he falls on the children. Some are worse than Ishmael: nature and civility made him submit to his mother for the choice of his wife. If children must obey their parents in little, much more in weighty matters. How little have you requited your parents? This you are bound unto, *To shew piety at home, and to requite parents is good and acceptable before the Lord.* Your parents took care of you when you were as beasts, you had your life and education from them, and what, now slight them when old or weak? What! laugh at their follies? What! when you are high, reject your parents that are low? The very heathen orator declaims against this, "We are not born (saith he) for ourselves, but partly for our country, partly for our parents." How are you degenerated from your parents' commands and examples? There are few true Rechabites, who forbore wine from generation to generation. It makes my heart ach when I read that *the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that out-lived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel; but there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, &c. and the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, &c. and provoked the Lord to anger: and the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers, that spoiled them: and he sold them into the*

hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies, O! in vain will ye relieve yourselves in your baptismal relations unto God, that you have Abraham to your father: God's judgments will be more bitter to you, more heavy on you, than on others, when the children of the kingdom shall be cast out. You will be ready to curse the day you came of such parents, that ever you had such holy instructions and examples, to no purpose, save to greaten your condemnation. The Lord said unto Moses, This people will go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be amongst them, and will forsake me and break my covenant which I have made with them: then mine anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us? Nay, Abraham (whom you trust to, and the privileges by him) will upbraid his son Dives with his former good things: Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. O most dreadful! Your very righteous parents shall rejoice in your ruin. The righteous shall rejoice, when he sees the vengeance, &c. So that a man shall say, Verily, he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

CHAP. XXXI.

The Sins of professing Masters and Servants.

FIRST, you masters, see how guilty you are in the relation of masters.

1. Should not your eyes, like David's, have been upon the faithful of the land, that they might dwell with you ? How curious should you have been in this particular ? But alas ! ye would not buy an horse, an house, a field, but ye would try them ; *but how careless have ye been whether your servants were godly, yea or no ?* If they were strong to labour, was not that all you regarded ? You looked that they should be diligent in your work ; your interest made you look to that, but have you looked for such as walked in a perfect way to serve you ? Hence many have been taken into professors' families, who were found wanton, and unclean, and thereby religion hath suffered exceedingly : and others sweet-tongued, gossiping, gluttonous, drunken servants, and so Acteon was devoured by his dogs : all the master's gettings have been put into a bag with holes : a just and righteous judgment upon the master for his preferring self before religion : yea, (which is a sadder consequence) hence the children are corrupted by evil example, they being more apt to imitate the servant in his wickedness, than the parent in his holiness. O, if you had been curious in this particular ! had you procured holy servants, by their zeal, forwardness and care of the children, what families might you have had ! all would have been pliable to your holy counsels.

Should you not have removed wicked servants as soon as all your counsels would not take effect on them? David did so. *He that worketh deceit, and telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight.* You, on the the contrary, keep them as you do horses, if good for labour. It will never be said to your glory, *the church in your house* : but may it not be said, there is a nest of snakes, a cage of devils in your house?

2. Are not you too righteous towards your servants? Do not you too much frown upon them, as Laban on Jacob? Do not you use words of reproach in your speaking to them? *Whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.* Do not you strike them unnecessarily or immoderately? Have you forgotten the commands from heaven? *Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour, but shalt fear thy God, Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven. And ye masters, forbear threatening, knowing that your master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him.* Do you herein as you would be dealt with? Would you have God to deal with you, as you deal with your servants? Remember, you and your servants have one and the same master, to whom you are both accountable, you for your rule, and they for their subjection.

3. Have not you neglected to give that direction to your several servants, which is proper for them, so that they intrench upon each other's work, and the painful work lies neglected, to your trouble, and to the raising of strife and passion? How few mistresses, yea, or masters, are like Solomon's virtuous woman, of whom it is said, *She looketh well to the ways of her household?* Every one should know his place and

work in the family, that all things may be done decently, and in order : but in how few families is it thus ?

4. Do you give your servants examples of diligence ? So did that virtuous mistress : *She riseth also whilst it is night, &c. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms : she layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff : she maketh herself coverings of tapestry : she maketh fine linen, &c. She eateth not the bread of idleness.*

5. What love do ye shew to your servants that be godly ? Do you receive them as beloved brethren ? As Paul would have Philemon receive his servant, after his conversion : *Receive him not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved.* A Christian servant should be in the place of a beloved brother, and should be preferred before a lewd son. *A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame : and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.* How seldom do you shew them good, as well as receive good from them ? When they are sick, how little attendance and necessaries have they as to diet, fire, and physic ? Are not too many like the Amalakite, who left his man on the plain fields *because he fell sick* ? How are many poor servants (who contracted their diseases by the unmerciful commands of some professors) cast off by them when sick, as unprofitable burthens ?

6. Do you pay your servants their wages ? Do you not pay them dudgingly ? Hast thou not forgot that the Israelites were required, when they set any servant free, not to let him go away empty, but *thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine-press : of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee, thou shalt give unto him* ? Hast not

thou abated them of their dues for the time of their sickness, or the time they have spent in the service of God ?

7. Do not you deny liberty to your servants to speak unto you ? Job would not slight his servant's cause. God hath set masters over servants ; but he hath not given them liberty to trample them under their feet. Servants are under their master's power, but not their lusts. You shew yourselves Nabals by this churlishness and austerity. *He is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.*

8. Do not you suffer one servant to tyrannize over another ?

Secondly :—You servants that profess ; I have somewhat in charge against many of you.

1. Your pride, sauciness, and familiarities with your governors, make me think you would easily swallow the error of old, that we are to be subject to none but Christ, as if your freedom by Christ, had exempted you from all civil subjection to men. By your refusing the yoke of your master's commands, you reflect more upon your master in the heavens, than upon your earthly governor : What saith the apostle ? *Let us many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour ; that the name of God, and his doctrine be not blasphemed. Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. Servants be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.*

But alas ! how saucy are servants ? May not your master say, *If I be a master, where is my fear ?* How fearless are you of your masters, especially if your masters be not very rich and honourable in the earth ? who respects God's or-

dinance? Hence many professing servants stand covered in their master's presence, sit before them, bow not to them, nor rise up before them.

2. Do not you when you meet together, blazon the infirmities of your masters? Do not you carry yourselves as spies rather than as servants? you do not herein as you would be dealt with.

3. Are you not disobedient to your master's commands, unless in what pleaseth you? You are the servants of your own lusts, rather than your master's servants: you do not obey in singleness of heart, yea, you are not indeed obedient. The centurion could say to *his servant*, *Go, and he went*, &c. The heathen servants excel some that pretend to great attainments of religion. *He is the master that must have his own way*; judge ye then in yourselves, whether you abide in the place, wherein God hath set you?

4. Do not ye refuse to answer when you are called by your masters? This was Job's plague, *I called my servant and he gave me no answer*. Silence is sometimes a sign of consent, but here of contempt. If a servant answers not, when he is called, he forgets what his calling is. The servants in David's days were of better dispositions, they did pick out their master's mind out of every motion and turning of his eye, and hand, and so were continually in a posture for obedience. *The eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress*. For want of that honour that is due from professing servants to their masters, *the name of God is blasphemed*.

5. As some by silence, so others by their tongues, dishonour their masters by answering again. They should not answer by way of contradiction, or reluctance, as servants are very

apt to do. Some will even brag how they gave word for word (perhaps blow for blow), nay, two words for one. Hereby their governors, if ungodly, fall foul upon religion. Is this the fruit of your profession? prayers? running after ministers?

6. How lazy are some professing servants? Diligent only when under their master's eye. Few serve their masters, as Jacob, Laban, with all their might. The command is that you should *obey in singleness of heart, not with eye-service as men-pleasers*. Mark, eye-service stands not with uprightness of heart. As you would not be brauded for hypocrites, work behind your masters' backs, as if their eyes were upon you. Consider how short you fall of this, and mourn before the Lord in secret for your eye-service.

7. How do some, yea many servants, eye only the pleasing their masters, but do not their work so spiritually as to seek to please the Lord? *Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart*. It is true, servants should labour to please their masters, yea, in all things; but they should seek more to approve themselves to God, than to any earthly superior.

8. How imprudent are some professing servants as to the timing of their duties? Some when never so urgent business is to be dispatched, will then go in secret to call upon God; whereas going to bed later, and rising earlier, would prevent much straitness as to time, and spirit in that great duty: some will fall a talking of the things of God to their fellow-servants very unseasonably, not when they are at leisure, but when they are most busily employed for their masters, to the hindering of their work.

9. How many cheat and defraud their mas-

ters ? Some cheat them of their time, by idling it away, being tattlers, and busy-bodies, or gossiping it away : others cheat them of their money or goods, hiring others secretly to do their work, and pay them with their master's money or goods. Is not this purloining ? and therefore forbidden ?

10. How many are improvident for their master's goods and gain ? They will see things spoil before their eyes : they will give what is not their own to give : they make no conscience to eat and drink what their masters do not allow them : they are not contented with his allowances : they will steal small matters, and yet whatever they take, though but little, is the breach of the eighth commandment, and the less the temptation the greater the sin, that they will break God's law for trifles : and serve the devil for pieces of silver, and morsels of flesh. What saith Mr. Dod ? " If ever they look for sound peace of conscience, they must make restitution of all such things : how much soever they steal, so much they must restore, and the fifth part thereto, or if they keep it, unless they repent, they keep God's curse with it, and a woe unto their consciences."

11. How many are altogether careless to get any good to their souls while under religious governors ? They ask not the way to heaven, and if examined they are tongue-tied, and will give no account of the hope that is in them.

12. How do we murmur under reproofs and corrections ? What saith the apostle ? *Servants be subject to your masters, not only to the gentle, but to the froward ; for this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully : for what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently ? but if when ye do well, and suffer*

for it, ye take it patiently : this is acceptable with God.

13. How unfaithful are many to their master's children? Not heeding them, and providing meat, and other necessities for them in their master's absence?

14. How scornfully do even professing servants receive a catalogue of their duties? How loath are they, yea how do some hate, to know the mind of God, as to the extent of their obedience?

15. How many ways do you fail towards your fellow-servants! Do not you seek to undermine them of the respect their masters bear them? Do not you labour to supplant them? Do not you envy them? Are not you unfaithful to one another's souls? Do not you waste time in idle and impertinent discourses? Are not you evil examples to each other? Do not you suffer sin to rest upon each other? Are not you guilty of not casing and relieving them, when they are overcharged with business? Do not you carry yourselves proudly and magisterially towards apprentices? Do not you join in a confederacy to tell tales against your governors? And do not you charge your fellow servants with secrecy therein, whereby the name and authority of the master is lost, and all hopes of edifying are taken away?

CHAP. XXXII.

The Miscarriages of Professors, with reference to the Ministers of Christ, while they were resident with them.

1. **H**OW little have you esteemed ministers, and how much have you slighted them? Though they were the ambassadors of the Lord of heaven, and should have had respect, according to the rank of their master, that sent them; yet how little did you honour them in your hearts? Did you *know them, and esteem them highly, for their work's sake?* Have not you very much slighted both their persons and message? How many have thought they knew as much as their ministers, and therefore undervalued them? How many ministers have been slighted for their mean parts? As if the efficacy of the ordinance depended upon the rhetoric of the preacher: as if no dainties could be brought them in a homely dish, no treasure in an earthen vessel: as if God could not *speak out of the mouths of babes*: as if the using Jordan were too contemptible a means? I have feared the unsoundness of many hearts from the *itching* of their *ears*: Paul was careful to preach not with *enticing words*, with *the wisdom of words*; though he could speak with *tongues more than all*, yet he desired to *speak rather to edification*. It is likely your ministers could have been seraphical, and in the clouds, but they *stooped* and descended to your capacities, and *denied* themselves that they might gain you: more desiring that you should be brought in love with the naked truth of the gospel, than with the dress it comes in. A ser-

mon full of plain naked scriptures would not suit our last times. It is observed by an historian, that before the great massacre in France, the Protestants were for a luscious, wanton kind of preaching. "Truly (saith one of our own about 18 years since) we cannot absolutely determine what will become of us : only we have cause to fear that consciencious sermons, as much despised as they are, may be a commodity dear enough in England ere long, and visions may be left open that they may be more precious." How unworthily have the ministers of Christ been slighted by even such professors, who a little before, pretended at least, to have had their life and growth from them, and that they were the seals of their ministry, that they were begotten and bred up under their shadow ; and yet in process of time have had low, mean, base and unworthy thoughts of them, debase them as children of antichrist, as limbs of Babylon ? Have not many eminent professors been ready to entertain reports against their ministers ? and have they not lost their esteems of them for one real or supposed weakness of theirs ? Though you have been under so many engagements to them for your spiritual life, &c. yet if you have seen a little failing or miscarriage in them, have not you forgot all their worth, and all their many years labours and cares for your eternal welfare ? Have not you been so far from esteeming the messenger for the message, that you have slighted the message for the messenger ? Hath not this been the language of your hearts, if not of your mouths, "What nothing but this preaching ? Have not those that at first admired, afterwards made nothing of this heavenly manna, because of the commonness thereof ? When pearls were common among the Romans, they

wore them upon their shoes. Hath not even the pearl of the gospel been trodden under foot by you? Have not you considered only the matter, and not the stamp of the coin? Have not your ministers, though they have not *kicked the dust of their feet against you*, yet oft complained to God of the contempt you have put upon them, and how much their embassy hath been undervalued by you? It may be you have thought it was no great matter to slight them and their counsels: but know for your trembling and amazement of spirit, therein you have slighted Christ himself. *He that despiseth you, despiseth me.* May you not fear it will be *more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for you?*

2. How full of undue prejudices have your hearts been against your ministers? and you have not had the honesty to examine the grounds? When they have delivered truths of a sublimer nature, than ordinary; or have delivered any thing more obscurely, than at other times, how rarely have you conferred with them thereabout? Have not you gone among your companions, and filled your own and their hearts with prejudices against them? When they have insisted long upon one subject, have not you been offended? But when did you ever exclaim against others for being too long telling money to you, for spending too many hours therein? Hereby you have done the devil as great a piece of service as any you could have done him in your lifetime. Let me publish that to thine eye, which was once whispered in the ear: "*Take heed what thou dost, this man is a Roman:*" Should not you much more have taken heed of filling your own and others' hearts with prejudice against your ministers, seeing they were the prophets of the Most High:

these men were men of God : they were the special ambassadors of heaven ? I think he said well, that " Prejudice against the preacher is the greatest prejudice to the hearers." This fever of prejudice hath made many, like the full stomach, to loath the honeycomb. Hath not God met with repulses, whilst your ministers have been entertained with prejudice ? So long as you have been prejudiced, though you were convinced of many duties, yet you have not been persuaded to obey the truth. This hindered the Jews from closing with Christ, and *made their house desolate*, overturned their temple, so that *a stone was not left joined to a stone* : it brought a kind of doomsday on them.

3. How little have you blessed God for the gospel-ministry which you have enjoyed ? and yet hath it not been the best under the cope of heaven ? This distinguishing mercy did not affect your hearts as it ought. Some there were (but very few) would say, " Brown bread, and the gospel, is a feast." Few, like the Christians at Constantinople, cried out, " Better the sun not shine, than Chrysostom be silenced." You could bless God for health, estate, &c. but not for these great luminaries of glory, who were appointed to conduct and guide you unto the heavenly Jerusalem.

4. How little did you pray for them ? How little have you prayed for gifts and abilities to go through their whole work, for preservation for them, and for a sanctified use of all God's dispensations toward them ? How little did you deprecate the stopping of their mouths, and supplicate that their mouths might be kept open, and *that utterance might be given unto them, that they might open their mouths boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel ?* Have not they oft entreated your prayers, in the words

of Paul, *I beseech you brethren for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me, in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea* (in England?) and yet have not you neglected to call upon God for their deliverance? How can you tell, but their mouths had still been opened, had not you neglected prayer? Hath not Christ promised, *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you : To him that knocketh, it shall be opened ?*

5. Have not you made sorry excuses for not hearing them? How little have you believed that word, *He that heareth you, heareth me?* And by consequence, that not hearing of them, was not hearing of Christ himself. What slight excuses have been deemed sufficient to keep you from the shepherd's tents? The apostle would have us swift to hear : swiftness denotes diligence in taking the first occasion ; but how have you, in compliment with a friend, to indulge the flesh, for fear of a little rain, for fear of wetting your feet, for fear of losing a six-penny, yea a penny customer, declined several opportunities of attending the ambassadors God sent you? For these things the wrath of God is breaking out upon you : the day is come, or coming, when ye shall *wander from mountain to kill, from sea to sea, and seek bread and find none.* This very excuse, the fear of *defiling her feet*, would not serve the spouse.

6. How did you miscarry, both *before*, and *in*, and *after* hearing? How slender was your preparation to attend upon these deputies of Christ? How little did you meditate on the word you were to receive at their lips? Did you thus consider? The gospel that I am about to hear, will be the *savour of life unto life, or of death unto death* : I shall be nearer heaven or hell by this

sermon I am going to : *If the Gospel* be always *hid*, I am a *lost soul*, and *shall perish* : is my soul hungry ? This is the bread of heaven : Is my soul thirsty ? this is the water of life : this is the milk whereby I must grow up unto eternal life : this messenger of heaven will be *for the fall as well as the rising of many in Israel* : If he be not instrumental for my salvation, he will for my damnation : *As the rain cometh and watereth the earth and returneth not thither, &c.* So shall God's word that goeth forth out of this minister's mouth, not return unto him void. How little did you consider the excellency and necessity of the word that you were to partake of ? What *treasure* was afforded you *in an earthen vessel* ? That the truths and doctrines that your ministers taught you, were of as much worth, as your souls, as heaven, as salvation ?

How little did you pour out your souls in prayer before God, before you went to hear your ministers ? Either for your ministers, that God would open their mouths to speak the word truly, sincerely, powerfully, and seasonably, and suitably to your condition : or for your own souls, that God would open your hearts, to entertain the word so as to profit by it, that you might not have open ears and shut hearts, that you might not have *ears, and yet hear not*, as knowing that *the hearing ear, and seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them* ?

How careless were you to purge your souls before you came to hear the word ? Moses before he was to hear God speaking *put off his shoes*, to intimate that you should put off your carnal and earthly affections before you come to hear God's word : But have not you rushed out of your worldly employments to many a sermon ? How careless were you to *lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness*, that you might

receive with meekness the engrafted word ; which is able to save your souls ? If you have not come without habitual, have you not neglected actual, preparation ?

When you have been actually under the ministry, have not you heard irreverently ? without awful apprehensions of God's majesty and presence ? Have you said of the place where any minister of Christ hath preached unto you, as Jacob of Bethel, *how dreadful is this place ?* Have you in your hearing sermons *set yourselves in the presence of God*, as Cornelius did, when Peter was preaching unto him ? The king of Moab will rise up in judgment, to condemn the irreverence of many of our professors ; when Ehud told him, *I have a message to thee from God : the king arose from his throne, and bowed himself.*

Have not you evinced your irreverence in hearing carelessly, dully, drowsily, sleepily, &c ? Have not you lent a more attentive ear to a tale, to a fable, to a romance, to a ballad, to a stage-play of several hours length, than to a sermon of an hour ? Have not you come to church, as to an apothecary's shop, for a receipt to sleep ? Hath not the gospel come unto you *in word only*, and *not in power* ? When the minister threatened you from the Lord, could you say, *my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy righteous judgments ?* How many months and years did God's servants threaten you with *a famine of hearing the word of the Lord ?* but did this judgment fright you, and humble you, whilst it lay in the cloud of the threatening, as the least appearances of an outward famine have awakened you ? When your ministers came with the tidings of peace to you, were *their feet beautiful ?* May not your ministers complain of you, as Christ of the Jews, *My word takes no place in*

you? So careless have you been of any thing that hath been spoken to you by them, though in the name of the Lord. When your ministers declaimed against your sins, did you so mind what they delivered, as to be at all troubled? Did you not *harden your hearts as an adamant*? Were you not so far from being troubled for your sins, that it was your only trouble you could not commit them without controul? Were you not even troubled with admonition, and counsels, commands and threatenings, that crost you in your sins? Can you say that you *received the word with all readiness of mind*?

Have you not heard heartlessly? without a real sense of your want of the word, and without an appetite to it? Had you such vehement desires after the treasure your ministers were bringing you, as covetous men have after the treasures of the earth? Could you ever with David, say, *My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times*?

Have not you heard unbelievingly? Not crediting your ministers' doctrine, and not applying it to, but shifting it off from yourselves? Have not their sermons been therefore unprofitable to your souls, because *not mixed with faith*? Can you say, that you received their word, *as the word of God*? That you applied it to your souls, as that which concerned you? May not we say, with grief of soul, as our Lord hath said already; *You have not heard his voice at any time*? When you heard the word, which is God's word, did you hear God himself speaking his own word unto your hearts?

Have you not been cautioned by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by his ministers, with a *Take heed how you hear*? And yet how oft have you heard the ministers of Christ carpingly? Not with a willingness to be judged by the word, but

to judge it, and the preacher for it? Have not you let slip the most material passages of the sermon, and pitched upon the weaknesses or impertinencies of the minister? How oft have you, when you could not blame the subject matter, found fault with the method, and the manner of delivery; and overlooked that, wherein your souls were especially concerned?

Have not you heard non-obediently? Have not you been untractable and unteachable? Have you not heard proudly, and not humbly? With hard hearts, and not with hearts of flesh, ready to receive the impression of the word, and willing to be moulded and fashioned according to it? When could you say to any of God's ministers, as Cornelius to Peter, *We are all here present to hear all that is commanded of God?* When wast thou of such an yielding spirit, as Saul was of, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* His ear and heart was open to every command: So was Job's, *That which I see not teach thou me.* Have not you had your exceptions? If ministers have enjoined you to pray in your families, perhaps you heard them therein; but if they enjoined from the Lord (the same legislator) that you pray in your closets, that you examine yourselves, that you fill your hands with both the tables, they could not be heard; one reserve at least: Whereas the right hearer cries out, *Lord, What wilt thou have me to do?* I will do any thing Lord, actively or passively, to get hell out of my soul now, and to keep my soul out of hell hereafter.

After hearing the ambassadors of heaven, how faulty have you been, in not examining what you have heard by the written word? The Bereans consulted with the oracles of God, brought the doctrines they heard to the measuring line of the sanctuary; but so have not you: they

say a man will tell money after his father ; but you have been too careless, to tell over the doctrines you have heard. . How many were there to whom the reputation and worth of the teacher, was sufficient proof of his doctrine, receiving all that was stamped with his tongue ? Have not you called such and such a minister, your father on earth, in the same sense in which Christ forbids it ? Have not you had the persons of men in admiration, and that for advantage ? No wonder that errors have abounded. Men, that through an over esteem of the minister, take all upon trust, or through sloth will not examine doctrines, are like to be deceived.

May not Christ check you, rather than the disciples, with, *Why do you not remember ?* Have not you heard the word, and instantly forgot it ? hath not the word gone in at one ear, and out at another ? have not you *let slip* the word ? The word παραρρυόμεν is metaphorical, taken from a sieve, or leaking vessel, when the liquor runs out as fast as it is put in. Have not you hereby been *ever learning, but not come to a knowledge of the truth ?* Your memories should be like the ark, wherein the pot of manna was kept ; but alas ! when you heard the word then came *the wicked one, and caught away what was sown in your hearts ;* and was not the word, and the labours of Christ's ministers fallen so low, that you were contented, at least little troubled, thus to be pillaged of this heavenly treasure ?

Have not you neglected meditation upon the word you have heard ? It was one special way, whereby in time of the law, the clean beasts were known from the unclean, *chewing the cud.* But how few ruminate upon what they have heard and received ? They do not with Mary *keep the sayings, and ponder them in their hearts.* *Blessed are they, that hear the word, and keep it.*

How few retire into their closets, and reflect on the usefulness of the word, for the nourishment of their graces, for the destruction of their sins? How few consider, whether they have met with God in the sermon, yea or no? You should have gathered up the words of Christ's minister, as Christ said of the fragments, *so as none should be lost* : or as the goldsmith looks after the very dust of gold : but as soon as conscience was quieted, did you ever think more of the word?

How few have gone from the church to the closet, there to pour out their souls for a blessing upon what they heard? From the pulpit to the trade is bad : but from the pulpit to the ale-house, that is abominable : but all are not clear herein : O ! if when your sin was discovered ; you had gone into your chambers, and begged humiliation for it, and victory over it ; and if, when neglected duty was prest in public, you had retired, and prayed to God to incline your hearts to keep his statutes, would it not have been better with you, than now it is?

Have not you neglected to talk of what you have heard? Have not some, as soon as dismissed from the sermon, fallen into impertinent discourses ; about news and trifles, or into worldly business ; and so the *thorns choked all* the convictions, which they received under the ministry? They consider not, that the word they have heard, hath been the *savour of life, or of death* ; and that every one that goes from a sermon, goes off either with God, or the devil, in his company.

Have not you been hearers of the word only, and not doers of it? Have not you so *deceived your own selves*? Your ministers have pressed you to secret prayer, and to constancy in it ; but have not you gone away, and continued in the neglect of that, wherein the power of godliness,

and heart-sincerity mainly consists? *Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it*, i. e. that are good practitioners, that have a conscientious care to regulate heart and life according to what they hear and know: they are rather blest, than the mother of Christ was, for bringing him into the world: Christ puts a *rather* upon the good practitioner, than upon the Virgin Mary. But alas! Let it be for a lamentation, that so many professors have been for hearing; but for doing only what they listed: *Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat? Making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea and sell the refuse of the wheat? The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, &c. The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof: But blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.* When did you find the glasses to discover and amend your spots? Have you been *cast into the form of the doctrine, which ye have received? Have you obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to you? Hath your profiting appeared answerable to the many months and years you have sat under the dews of heaven? What do you know more than you did before? What do you believe, love, and hope for, more than you did? Have your hearts and lusts stooped more and more to the sceptre of Christ? Believe it, sirs, If sin be not more odious, and Christ more sweet and precious, after you have been in the shepherds' tents, you have lost your hearing hours, yea contracted*

more guilt to your souls. That you have not been *changed from glory to glory*, is a great stain to the ministry, and a great ground of sadness to the poor ministers, who fear they have laboured in vain. And yet have not you been such unprofitable hearers, that *Seekers, Ranters and Quakers*, have occasion to cry down the office of the ministry, as a cheat, as an old almanack out of date; because they have seen how unsuccessful the labours of Christ's ministers have been upon your souls? If you had come down from these mounts with your faces shining, if you had received more of God upon your hearts and lives, you had more credited the ministry, and put to silence these foolish men. What shall I say? A worse famine is coming on professors, than what happened to Egypt, and if you have laid up no store, what will ye do in the years of lean kine?

7. Have not you greatly miscarried, as to consulting with them? Though one great work of your minister was, to deal personally with your souls: and God intrusted them with *the power of binding and losing*, (doctrinally at least) and hath promised *to loose in heaven, what they loosed on earth*; and *to confirm the word of his servants, and perform the counsel of his messengers*; yet how little weight have you laid upon *their judgments*?

Have not you more credited the physician's opinion of your bodies, and the lawyers about your estates, than you have your ministers concerning your souls?

How seldom are ministers consulted with about the business of the soul and eternity? Will not they in the Acts rise up to condemn this generation? They repaired to Christ's ministers, with, *Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved!* But alas! How many have sat 50, 40,

50 years under a minister, and never advised with him what to do?

They have been no more moved, than the rocks were, that Bede preached to.

Or else, through the pride of their hearts, they have thought to heal themselves: they have been so puffed up with their own knowledge, that they have not cared to hear what their ministers could declare unto them. If they be to take a journey, they will ask the way of every one they meet; but so unreasonably confident are they of their knowing the way to glory, (though there be many ways that do indeed lead down to hell, yet seem the right way to heaven) that they will not so much as ask the way thitherward of any guide. *The fool is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason.*

Or else they have thought as well of their souls as some do of their flesh, that the wound will heal of itself. And hath it not so done, nobody knows how? Can you tell how the trouble and impressions made by the ministry in your own souls have worn away? Have not ministers found after the house hath been swept and garnished, that *seven worse spirits have entered* into the souls of many convinced, and terrified professors, and *their latter end was worse than their beginning*? Many (saith the famous Hooker) in a stupid kind of sottish senselessness, wear out the blow, and so waste away to nothing: as many out of sorrow have become like senseless blocks.

How oft hath Satan, drawn thee into solitudes, dissuaded thee from going near thy minister, that he may rob thee of thy convictions? And the better to effect this; hath he not persuaded thee to look on the minister as proud, high, scorning to condescend to hear thy soul grievances

and complaints, whereas he hath many, and many a time with the greatest importunity begged this trouble of dressing thy sores?

If you have consulted with your ministers, have not you delayed going to these soul-physicians? When the wound was newly given and bleeding, you should have repaired to them; but like Felix, you have dismissed your convictions to some other opportunity. How hath Satan deceived many? persuading them that there needs not so much ado, that the minister is too legal, that he will drive to despair, that (as Ahab thought of Micaiah) he will not speak one comfortable word, or that he will blazon the secrets of their souls, and so they shall get a blot by unbosoming themselves.

8. Have not you had low ends in visiting them? yea, not only low, but base in going to your shepherds' tents? Perhaps they are full of history, and you would enrich yourselves with the knowledge of the times of many generations past: perhaps they were merry, (too merry, God knows, too full of squibs and jests, the Lord forgive the unseriousness of ministers) and you have delighted in them, as Saul did in David's harp, to drive away sadness and melancholy: or perhaps your ministers had quick, nimble parts, and you went to them to pick a sallad from their gardens, to pick some flowers of oratory, or to please your fancies, or to spend away time; but how seldom to receive virtue from Jesus Christ through these pipes? how seldom to have your rocky hearts broken, and to be cured of your earthly spirits?

9. How oft have you invited them to your houses only to feast them, and to shew outwardly your respect unto them? but have not put the opportunity to such uses, as Mary did Christ's coming to her house? how light, vain, unseri-

ous, and jesting have you been in their company? It had been more your wisdom, as well as duty, to have proposed some necessary queries to them with respect to your eternity: you should have drawn out their gifts and graces by proposing such questions as these.

“How, Sir, shall I know the difference between the assisting, and the informing and inhabiting presence of the Spirit? How shall I discern *the spirit of bondage*, from that *bondage Satan works in the children of disobedience*? How shall I know the difference betwixt temporary and saving faith? between legal and evangelical repentance? How shall I know moral virtues from graces? How shall I know that I am gone beyond the utmost refinements of hypocrites? How shall I know whether the gospel hath had a saving efficacy on mine heart? How shall I know Satan’s temptations, from the suggestions of mine own heart? How shall I know when Satan, and when the Spirit applies promises? How shall I discern the motions of the Holy Ghost, from the impulses of Satan, when *transforming himself into an angel of light*? How shall I know the teachings of the Spirit, from the teachings of men? How shall I distinguish fancy from faith? How shall I know, whether I have only dreamed, that I am full, when all the while I have been empty? How shall I know the devil’s black temptations, from mine own corruptions, that I may know whom to charge? How shall I get assurance that my sins are pardoned? How may I obtain victory over the world? How may I be delivered from spiritual sloth? What shall I do that I may retain the influences of ordinances upon my spirit? How may I be more useful to all my relations? How may I bridle my tongue, so as to speak evil of no man? How shall I know what

is the work of my generation? How shall I do to work the works of God? What shall I do to get a trembling heart under the word and works of God? How shall I get a soft heart, to mourn for my own and others' sins? How shall I know what is my constitutional sin? How shall I know whether my courage be from natural temper or the grace of God? How shall I know whether my patience be natural or spiritual? How shall I know that I shall spend an eternity with God?"

Such questions as these should have been seriously debated with your ministers; but wo and alas! When you and your ministers have spent hours together, have not you contracted guilt, and made yourselves unfit for secret duties, nay perhaps have not time for the discharge of them?

10. How have you devoured much precious time in the presence of your ministers? Both your own, (which is short enough, therein to make your calling and election sure) and (which is a much more heinous evil) your minister's time? Have not you diverted him from his great meditations and projects for the everlasting good of your souls? Have not you called your ministers from their knees and studies to entertain you? and have not you proved wells without water? Have not you by needless vain conferences obstructed your own good, and hindered your ministers from being useful to your own, and many more souls.

11. When you have met with your ministers, *have not you been swift to speak* (when to little purpose) *and slow to hear*, what your minister, God's deputy, would have said unto you? whereas God requireth you to *be swift to hear, and slow to speak*. I have wondered to see the impudence of some women herein, who (as if none had tasted of the tree of knowledge, save them-

selves) have been like bladders full of wind, ready to burst till they had vent, and had no respect to the presence of their minister, who could not be heard, because of their noise and clamour; though the apostle hath sealed up their lips, by sending them to *ask questions of their husbands at home*; yet they must be prattling as if they had a monopoly of all knowledge, and as if their ministers were to learn of them, rather than they of their ministers. I am confident it is not the Spirit of God; but the spirit of pride, self-conceit, and vain-glory, which putteth private persons upon these bold intrusions: so that the minister, who is the mouth of God, is made dumb by their overmuch speaking, who should *learn in silence*. What shall I say? hear not me but the wisest of men, yea the only wise God in him: *In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise*. Believe it, there hath been wanting in most professors much humility, much seriousness, much reverence of their ministers: you have not had that fear and awe which became you: few have trembled at their approach to their ministers, as the people did when Samuel drew near.

12. Your niggardliness to your ministers is none of the least of your sins; and therefore I shall take liberty to enlarge upon it. If men's titles to their cottages, their water-courses, their ways, their casements be questioned, presently a lawyer is fee'd: we will be at any cost to settle the world surely ours: if our health be in danger the physician is sent for: both lawyers and physicians' houses and rooms are full of clients and attendants; but men are contented to clear up their own titles to heaven and glory, and to heal themselves of their sin-sicknesses: a plain argument, that they thought the ministry but

useless, and that they could make a shift to live without ministers. Thou hast had prescriptions for thy soul's recovery and health for these many years, and yet perhaps, hast not given one farthing to thy soul-physicians. If a physician write a few lines, purses are opened : if a lawyer plead a quarter of an hour, yea if he plead not at all, but only give his advice, you think he deserves a fee ; but the minister's work is so low in thy esteems, that he might have starved if all were as niggardly as thou hast been. Let this be considered and lamented. Your ministers have been under a temptation to withhold the pressing of this duty upon you : for that may lay in wait to discredit them, as if they preached for hire, and *sought yours rather than you ?* but let me be your *remembrancer* this day. We cannot say of you, as Paul of the Galatians, that *you received us as angels of God, yea as Jesus Christ*, and that *you would have plucked out your eyes for us* : Alas ! what did you for us more than the constraints of the law compelled you to ? And how many wishes had you, that all the laws for tithes had been abrogated upon pretence that ministers should have had a better maintenance by a voluntary contribution ?

But do not we know that the great sticklers for this have been most illiberal to the ministers ? Have not some of them refused to give one penny to the ministers, whom they waited on for years together ? I wonder how you could in your reading the scriptures (if you have indeed read them) so long overlook, *who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges ? who planteth a vineyard and eateth not the fruit thereof ? or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock ? Say I these things as a man ? or saith not the law the same also ? For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God*

care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes no doubt this is written : that he that plougheth should plough in hope: and that he that thresheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel. That you may be the better convinced of the neglect of your duty, see the apostle claims it as his ἐξουσία, his power, his right, and lawful authority, to receive maintenance from the Corinthians: and indeed Christ hath empowered his ministers, that they may demand it, without any just imputation of covetousness and self-seeking, as the labourer may his hire. The apostle had power to forbear working, i. e. at his trade: he implies, that the ministry would be the saddest employment, because of the laboriousness of it, if ministers should not live of their ministry: besides, ministers give people gold for brass: again, they who ministered about the holy things, lived of the things of the temple, yea and plentifully too; for they had the tenth, and yet were scarce the sixtieth part of the people; for the number of the people, without the Levites, amounted to a thousand thousands, and three hundred thousands: and the Levites, numbered from the infant to the old man, were found but two and twenty thousands. But alas! Though the apostle be so peremp-
ory here and elsewhere, *Let him that is taught in*

the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things: And the wise man, Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thy increase; yet I may renew an old complaint: many have dealt by their ministers, as carriers do by their horses; they lay heavy burdens upon them, and then hang bells about their necks: hard work and good words they shall have, but easy commons, and slight wages: as if they were of the camelion-kind, and could live by the air.

But if you have parted with any thing to the minister, hath it not been as alms, not as dues, not as right? Have not you excused yourselves from giving what was due from you, with, *The minister needs it not, he hath a fair estate, or at least a competency? Yea, but what saith the apostle? Have ye not reaped our spiritual things? and should not we your carnals? Have ye not been instructed? Why then did ye not communicate to your ministers in all good things?* Hath not the Lord expressly alienated a proportion of goods for the minister's labour? How dare you live in the sin of sacrilege? Is it not sacrilege for you to detain from God what is due to him? *You are in the snare; for you have devoured that which is holy.* Suppose a man should work for thee all the day long, would it be an excuse for the detaining his dues from him, to say, *The man hath a competency, yea he is rich, he is richer than I am, my children want it more than he doth, he hath little or no charge? O! saith he Lord, The labourer is worthy of his hire.* Wouldst thou not say so in that man's case? O! Live up to the light of nature, or throw up thy profession. It is no less than a wonder to see how little honesty there is among men, yea among professors. To defraud a minister is hardly counted a sin. The rise of this is the great contempt of the ministry: a sin that God

is now reckoning with you for. *The Lord God of your fathers sent to you by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place; but you mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets: May it not be added, Until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy? For this sin, God brought upon the Israelites the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword, in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age, he gave them all into his hand. Have not you cause to fear, lest you shall also be so given into the hands of worse Babylonians? You can judge what is a minister's competency; but when have ye a competency? You can add field to field, house to house, hundreds to hundreds, and yet the horse-leech cries give, give: Yet do not you judge a small stipend, that will hardly keep body and soul together, a competency for a minister? What is that great service you do for God above the minister, that you should think it reasonable, to leave hundreds, yea thousands to your children, and that the minister should be kept so short, that he cannot leave them a groat? What shall I say to you? Let me borrow the words of God by the prophet: *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me: But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.**

O! do not any longer detain what is due to your former ministers: make restitution of unjust gain, as ever you hope to be saved. It is not enough to say, Lord, forgive me, I thought it not my duty; but thou must reckon how many years thou hast reaped spirituals, and pay what thou owest, or Judas will condemn thee, for he thought it unsafe to keep what was unjustly got. Remember Zaccheus, he thought it not enough to give over his oppression, but, when converted he made conscience of making restitution. *Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine: for the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox, that treadeth out the corn; and the labourer is worthy of his reward.* Here you see double honour, honour of reverence and honour of maintenance, was due unto your ministers: Here is an allusion to the right of the first-born, who were to have a double portion: Their maintenance was due from you; neither should their maintenance have been ordinary mercenary wages, but such as is given by way of honour, as well as by way of reward. Have not you lived in the contempt of an ordinance of God? *The Lord hath ordained, &c.* as before. Do not any longer delude your consciences, by crying against tithes, as antichristian, as Jewish. Did not Abraham, before the Jewish Laws, pay tithes to Melchisedec? And are there not from thence arguments drawn that you cannot answer! Why do ye not fear, lest, through the prevalency of self, you should be too base, covetous and partial in your own matters? O! give to God, what is God's: deny not your ministers their dues: you owe vast sums to them, which if you detain in this day of their wants, God will call you to a speedy account for the grinding of the faces of these poor, yea he will make you vomit up such sweet morsels,

with all the rest of your substance, if not with your blood. *Behold the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them, which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.* Lydia even enforced the apostles to accept of her gift. The Macedonians besought Paul with much entreaty, to accept of their bounty. If thou wert converted by one of them, thou didst owe to him no less than thyself: what thou art and hast, should not have been counted too dear for him, who was God's instrument, to pull thee as a brand out of the fire, even when thou wast half burnt. Say at length with David, *I will not serve the Lord with that which cost me nothing.* I shall conclude this head with the saying of a reverend man, "It is a plain argument of a base esteem of God, of grace, of the kingdom of heaven, that a servant, a factor, should have twenty times the allowance of heaven's factor for your souls: you are not come up to the honesty of the Pharisee, *he gave tithes of all that he possessed, even of the smallest things, of mint and anise, and Cummin*: And doth not Christ say, *These things ye ought to have done?* What were your ministers more unworthy than the priests of that age?"

13. If you have not been niggardly toward your ministers while alive with you, have not you been niggardly towards their wives and children after their deaths? Verily not minding the widows and children of deceased ministers is a sin that God will remember in the day of accounts. David inquired after the seed of Jonathan: he evidenced his true love to the father in remembering the posterity. O! when shall love be without dissimulation?

14. Have not you been a very great trouble to their souls? Your ministers were so affectionately

desirous of you, that they were willing to have imparted to you, not the gospel only; but also their own souls; because ye were dear unto them: And is this your kindness to your friends? to break even their hearts, who were glad to spend and be spent for you? how proudly have you carried it towards them? God threatened the Israelites that the *Canaanites should be pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their sides*: Surely it better became Canaanites to be thorns to the Israelites, than for you to be thorns to your ministers. How oft have you grieved them to see your stoutness and rebellion against all their counsels! May not your ministers say as David, *I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not thy word?* May they not say, we have seen your lukewarmness, your sloth, your earthliness, &c. and our souls were troubled? You should have been like the Thessalonians, *the crown of our rejoicing*; but you have been crowns of thorns, which have pierced not our heads, but hearts: You should have refreshed our bowels, been as cordials, and sweet refectives, after all our wearisome labours: but have not you dealt unkindly with us? and the more we have loved you, have not we had the less love from you? Have not you been more merciful to your horses or dogs, than to your ministers? You have baited, and been kind to those creatures; but God knows how after our toil, our rising up early, and sitting up late, our spending our strength, our lungs, our spirits, yea and our estates among you, you have requited us evil for good, even to the spoiling of our souls. *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?* &c. Have not you in your hypocrisy made outcries against others for si-

lencing your ministers? for taking away the bread out of yours and your children's mouths, and for removing them from their stations and dwellings? But may not I profess in the name of all my fellow-sufferers, that your misimprovements, your inconstances, your pride and earthliness, have been, and are our chiefest burdens? a greater pressure to us, than any burdens, that lie upon our names, bodies or estates? I cannot but think of a passage of holy Mr. Shepherd, The Jews (saith he) did long for Christ, and when he came, they crucified him: and you would have ministers, and you had them, and though you did not (immediately) cast them out of their places; yet you so wearied their spirits, and grieved their spirit in them, that you made them glad to bury themselves, and leave their places; you had prophets and their tears and their sorrows too, yea and their blood too, and O! what a light matter was it unto you to break their very hearts? How little did you *obey them that ruled over you, and submitted yourselves, that they might give their accounts with joy, and not with grief?* How little did you believe, that that is unprofitable for you? Have not you made nothing of it, for your ministers to lose their labour, to put them upon crying out, *I have laboured in vain?* Yea how have you grieved their very souls with reproaches? Some who have pretended affection to them, yet have had their reproachful names of priest, parson, vicar, &c. Though God hath put a crown of honour upon them, by making them his ambassadors, yet how have some impudent professors blasted them with their profane scoffs? Ambassadors are inviolable by the law of nations. The Lord (saith one) hath set a better mark on them, than Cain had, and given them a better passport: *touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm:* yet you have made a light matter of vexing their very souls, when you could have nothing else against

your minister, have not you been censuring him for his manner of speaking? *His letters* (say they) *are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.*

Lastly, Have not your ministers been so troublesome to you in your sins, in your formality, worldliness, lukewarmness, &c. that you were even weary of them? Have not you been as weary of them, as the children of Israel of Angel's food? as weary as weak stomachs are of feeding on one dish? Your ministers urged flesh-displeasing and self-denying duties: they would not suffer you to sin quietly: and were not you therefore burdened with them? they would not stand and comply with your carnal ends and sinful interests; and did not your hearts therefore cry out, away with them? Have not you been like the Gadarenes, more willing to part with your ministers, than with your swinish lusts? Because you did *not like to retain God in your knowledge*, it is no wonder if *God give up many of you to a reprobate mind.* Hath not the gospel been too costly, too chargeable to some of you; and too irksome, requiring too much pains taking, to others of you? O! when you remember your crying iniquities, for which God is chiefly contending with you, forget not this dreadful sin of being weary of God's ambassadors, of being weary of speaking with God, and of hearing God speak unto your souls.

CHAP. XXIII.

The Miscarriages of Professors, with reference to the Ministers of Christ, since their removal.

1. **H**OW many of you do not find them wanting? This will be evident by the following queries.

Have you indeed accounted that none in the world want help like yourselves upon this very account? Do you look upon yourselves as sitting in *darkness*, yea in the region and *shadow of death*? under a worse plague than the Egyptian darkness? that was a darkness, wherein men lived; but do you look on this as a darkness of death? Do you account a throne without the gospel but the devil's dungeon? wealth without the gospel, fuel for hell? Advancement without the gospel, but a going high, to have the greater fall? Do you look upon yourselves as under a worse famine than that of bread? Cannot you yourselves make up this great loss? Cannot you set other things in the breach?

Do not some of you set good books in the room of your ministers? "I confess" (saith a Reverend Man) "Reading hath its use; but the voice hath a secret force upon the soul, it hath a ministerial efficacy, by which the authority and sovereign efficacy of the Spirit is conveyed. I pray God the fruitfulness of the press may not beget a disesteem and contempt of the great ordinance of the minister already: you have been told already that Luther had rather his books should be burnt, than the scriptures suffer a dishonour and neglect by perusing his papers.

Do not some of you set your own parts and gifts in their room? Do not some of you think

that you have so profited by their ministry, that you have no further need to attend upon any ministers of Christ? May not such doubt whether their experience of the power and efficacy of the ministry hath been true, seeing true experience thereof sweeteneth the ministry unto souls, raiseth up their esteems of it, and engageth them to a further and more cheerful attendance upon it. A true taste will sharpen the soul's appetite: the true Christian gets a stomach by eating, as the new born babe by sucking. *As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if so be that ye have found that the Lord is gracious.*

Do not some of you go about to make up yourselves by attending on Christ's companions in the sense of Solomon; by going to *wells without water*? by sucking empty breasts, whence you can draw nothing, but wind or blood? What is this but seeking the living among the dead? expecting gracious showers from *coluds without rain*? making up the want of bread with stones, if not poison? O! why do not you say, *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?*

What sighs, sorrows, tears, &c. hath the removal of your ministers cost you? Cannot you rub it out very quietly? If you lose your jewels, estates, names, friends, children, &c. we can read the sorrows of your hearts in your countenances: you are almost angry with God when a gourd is smitten. O! what sinkings of heart are there among professors? What cares, fears, griefs, not only to the saddening of their hearts, but altering of their countenances, when the world vanisheth? And yet no aching hearts, no dejected countenances for the glory's departing, for God's shut-

ting up his house and departure? I am confident it hath not broke one night's rest to many, who yet will think themselves wronged, if they be not placed in the highest form of profession.

What time hast thou set apart to humble thy soul for all thy abuses of the gospel and ministry thereof? If a child be sick, time must be set apart to humble thee before God: this is your duty; but the other should not have been neglected. Thou mayest subsist better without children, than without these spiritual fathers: a gospel ministry is a greater jewel, than many sons and daughters. Thy having sinned away the food of thy soul should have put thee in sackcloth, and upon fasting with mourning long ago. *All Israel lamented after the ark.* But are not you as merry and sensual at your tables as ever?

Yea, are not you secretly glad at the removal of your *Ministers*? "*Ministers and ministry* (saith Shepherd) are bills of charges to a congregation, and too costly inhabitants among them."

2. Have you justified God in the removal of them? God as a wise and provident Master gave you glorious lights to do his work by; but you have played away your time: is it any wonder that he hath put out your tapers and candles? Have you confessed the righteousness of God herein, that he will not be at cost to find you candlelight to play by? Hath this been thy heart's acknowledgment, "God gave me these lights, that I might work for him by them; and because I did not, but wrought the works of darkness, therefore he hath most justly left me in darkness, and in the shadows of death: because *I received not the truth in the love thereof*: I took it into mine head, but not into mine heart; God may justly send me *strong delusions, that I should believe a lie.* It is the observation of Pareus upon many of the Jews being seduced, that it was just

with God, that they should believe impostors; because they would not give credit to Jesus Christ. O! God may make short work with us in his Judiciary proceedings. When God hath departed upon repulse, he hath left a dismal curse behind him: *I say unto you that none of these men, which were bidden shall taste of my supper*: if the meat be on the table, yet it is just with God that I shall never taste of it: for I have controlled the Spirit again and again: twenty, thirty, forty years have I vexed the good Spirit of the Lord, and therefore he may swear in his wrath that I shall never enter into his rest. If some shall never taste that have neglected one call, woe is me, who have neglected thousands. Take words and say; because I have not obeyed the voice of thy servants, it is righteous that I perish by the sword, and die without knowledge."

3. How little have you blessed, and do you bless God, that once you did enjoy a gospel ministry? and such a gospel ministry? How seldom are such words as these, Blessed be they, and blessed be their counsels, and blessed be the Lord, that sent them out to meet me in former days, and for so many days, months, and years together, found in your mouths? It is a sign that your disesteems of the gospel and ministry do still abide whilst you cannot find in your hearts to thank God for enjoying so choice a blessing for so many years together.

4. What cries have you sent up to heaven for the return of your ministers? Dare you thus imprecate, *Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, If I forget to pray for Zion's welfare in this particular*? Had the ministry of the gospel been counted a glorious blessing, you would have sent strong cries to heaven, for the return of it: had you believed, that they came to treat with your souls, about your peace with God, and that

God hath appointed this as the great means to bring your souls to himself, you would not have parted with your ministers so easily, being as little moved, as at the withering, and throwing to the dunghill, of a formerly flourishing nosegay of flowers, and you would have wrestled with the Lord, for the return of these glorious lights of heaven. How can you choose but fear, the Lord hath no more souls to convert in that place, from which the gospel is removed? Jesus Christ prayed, that the gospel might be sent to the Gentiles; *In an acceptable time have I heard thee.* O! how should you have prayed for the fruit of Christ's prayer? Have you backed prayer with prayer? Have you doubled your prayers for the return of your fathers? Have they not begotten you? *Should they not be unto you as fathers?* will not idolatrous Micah else condemn you?

5. How little do you set yourselves in a posture for the return of the gospel and the ministers of it? Until you have humbled your souls as low as the dust for your unprofitableness, pride, sensuality, earthliness, dis-esteems, and neglects of the gospel, for your abuse of the talents of gold, that you hid or wasted, can you imagine that God will entrust you with more talents? Alas! few put themselves in a readiness: few prepare to meet God, as formerly they have met him in the solemn assemblies. Verily, *God is gone and returned unto his place, till you acknowledge your offences* (your gospel-sins) *and seeks his face.* But if ye seek him not early, how can ye hope for the bringing back the captivity? that the glory and strength will return.

6. How little do ye now lay out for the refreshing and feeding of your poor ministers, now that their necessities are so growing? you cannot now excuse your niggardliness with this, they have a competency: Alas! most of them, and their

many little ones are in great straits and exigences and what, still straitened in your bowels? Is not the proverb verified, *Out of sight out of mind*? If all were as unmerciful as some of you, they and their children would swoon away in desolate wildernesses. Remember Hagar and the child: Did God pity that Egyptian? and have you no pity on your poor ministers? Are you not so far from the Macedonian bounty, of giving above your power, that you will not afford them your superfluities? Who is there that redeems from his table, from his belly, from his clothes, to cover these naked shoulders, and to fill these empty bellies? Doth not Baruch's sore run upon you? you trade for yourselves, seek great things for yourselves, and send away your spiritual fathers, with, I pray God bless you, &c. be ye clothed, &c. but do not give according to their necessities, and your abilities. O! *how dwelleth the love of God in you?* Boast what you will of your profession and faith, your *faith without works is but dead*.

CHAP. XXXIV.

Want of Love among Professors.

AS touching brotherly love (saith the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians,) *you need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another, and indeed you do it*: But may not I say to English Professors, *As touching brotherly love, you need that I write unto you for you are not taught of God?* "The fire of brotherly love (saith one) is almost ready to go out, scarce any spark of it yet remaining among us; but instead of the fire of love, the wild-fire of

passion rageth vehemently, and is predominant. Many live as if they had been born on the mountains of Bether, the mountains of division; and as if they had been baptized in the waters of Meribah, the waters of strife." *O! that my head were waters, and my eyes fountains of tears, to weep day and night for the want of love in the Christians of this generation towards one another. How common hath it been, to confine our love to our own party: We have not loved all the saints. How few Bucers are there? How few love all in quibus aliquid Christi vident, in whom they see any thing in Christ? Many even hate those that differ from them, though but in circumstantial others, though they are ashamed to profess their hatred upon such an account, yet cover their hatred by deceit, till their wickedness can be hid no longer, but shewed before the whole congregation. The devil began his legerdemain this way, by covering his enmity with pretence of friendship. What saith the apostle; Let love be without dissimulation: But alas! With a double heart how do professors speak? How few have purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren? Most love in word and in tongue only, but not in deed and in truth. Many, like your feather-caps humble servant, pretend love; but it never appears above board: it is dear friend, good soul; but their hearts are not with you. In order to the convincing us of our guiltiness herein, O that our consciences may be suffered to give in full answers to the following queries.*

1. How have we called for fire from heaven (like the two disciples) when we have thought ourselves dishonoured, in that others have not given such a reception to our ways and practices in religion, as we expected? Have not magistrates been instigated against godly persons, if of a dif-

ferent persuasion from ourselves? Have not we cried out, the land is not able to bear them? Have not we been glad, when such were put out of all offices and places of profit? And have not some thought it good service to God, if they had been killed? Whilst some under colour of mercy and tenderness, cried for a general toleration, even of blasphemy: others ran into the other extreme, and would endure nothing, that they deemed an error. Even to this day, if men scruple at the lawfulness of some ceremonies and gestures in the service of God, they are thought worthy, not only to be cast out of the church; but to be delivered over to the secular magistrate, for imprisonment and confiscation of goods at least: so much is Paul's meekness forgotten and unimitated, who (though zealous against the faith-destroying errors of Hymeneus and Philetus, yet) would have much forbearance for others, when doubting of the use of meats, and the Jewish ceremonies. "I read indeed in Pagan writers (saith one) that Christians were as cruel as bears and tygers against one another, &c. But I had hoped that this accusation had come from the malice of Pagan writers; little did I think to have seen it so far verified, &c. Lord, what devils are we unsanctified, when there is yet such a nature remaining in the sanctified: Such a nature hath God in these days suffered to discover itself, even in the godly, that, if he did not graciously and powerfully restrain, they would shed the blood of one another, and no thanks to us, that it is not done."

2. To facilitate the destroying of such without remorse. Have not we blotted out the reputation of their holiness, and represented saints even as devils? "It is utterly a fault among you, said one of our English worthies formerly, (Hildersham) that the difference in judgment and practice about

the ceremonies of our church, hath caused such strangeness, and alienation of mind and affection, between such as do truly fear God, both ministers and people. We are so far from receiving, esteeming, loving and maintaining society one with another, notwithstanding this difference of judgment about these things, that we are apt to despise and judge one another for it, and doubt whether there be any truth of grace in them, that differ from us in these things. Surely, (*saith the one side*) the indifferency and lawfulness of these things, is now so clearly manifested, as these men must needs be wilfully blind, that do not see it: nay, certainly they cannot choose but see it well enough, and were it not for a carnal respect to their credit with the people, among whom they have gotten a great name and applause, by standing out so long, they would doubtless conform themselves. And surely (*saith the other side*) the utter unlawfulness of these ceremonies is now so clearly revealed, that these men must needs be wilfully blind, that see it not. Nay, they do see it well enough, and were it not for a carnal respect they have unto their worldly place, and estate, they would never use them; certainly they sin against their conscience in observing of them: and what truth of grace can there be in them, that are wilfully blind, and for carnal respects do thus sin against their own conscience? Thus do both sides grossly and dangerously err and sin against their brethren: *And when you sin so against the brethren, ye sin against Christ.* For the experience of all times, and of this present age, proveth evidently, that there be of both sides, that fear God unfeignedly, and in the whole tenor and course of whose conversation, the life and power of true godliness both manifestly appear. And if thou do not see this (whoever thou

art, that art most bitter and violent of either side then art thou certainly thyself most wilfully blind. And I do assure thee (in the name of the Lord, and by good warrant out of his word) that if thou canst not unfeignedly love every one that truly feareth the Lord, (whether he conform, or not conform) if thou canst not bewail and strive against these hard conceits thou hast been wont to entertain against such, thou canst have no comfort at all in thine own estate before God."

Thus far he that was in his time *England's* best preacher. And is the matter in any respect amended now! O! how have professors spoken all manner of evil against those that have differed from them in circumstances? Have they not publicly railed one at another? What filthy names have they given one another? Schismatics, rebels, dividers, peace-breakers, enemies to the state, &c. even as bad as the heathens gave the Christians? Have not we been so eager against such, that all the people's time hath been swallowed up in invectives of one party against another? Have not we been cooled and blunted, and lost our zeal in matters of greatest moment, by letting out our zeal against the supposed errors of our brethren?

3. If we have not been guilty of un-sainting them; yet how little have we heeded the commands of God against backbiting? *Thou shalt not go up and down, as a tale-bearer among the people. Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly.* When the apostle would set forth the great abominations of the Gentiles, he saith, they were whisperers and *backbiters*. Were there love, it *would cover all sins*. Whom we love, we are wont to commend and praise; but instead of this, how do we speak against those that differ-

from us, behind their backs, though we speak fair to their faces? O abominable hypocrisy! Have not some commended an action to the face of the man, and presently in another place and company censured the same? Whom we love we would have others to love; but by backbiting we seek to draw off others also from their duty. Herein, O! how do we serve the devil, who is the great mediator of differences? I have oft thought of the artificial kind of backbiting in Bernard's time: "When they slander, they will fetch deep sighs as if they were much grieved, that others should be so and so guilty, yea they will say, I am exceedingly sorry for such an one, that he should commit so heinous a crime: when perhaps it was all the while but a base lying report. Besides they will charge the tale-bearer with the greatest secresy, when they will take liberty to asperse as far as they have opportunity, they tell the fault only to a friend, that will tell nobody, but folks, of it. But why may not he have forfeited the gift of keeping counsel, as well as thyself; why shouldst thou think that the hearer will conceal, when thou the teller canst not? And if thou hast a mind the brother's infirmities should be hid, why dost not thou hide them? Or why dost thou disclose them to one; whom thou suspectest to be no way friendly to the infamed person? If a man of a different persuasion live so humbly, that we are forced to commend them, yet we will surely bring in one calumny of other, that shall blot the persons and weaken allourencomiums of him, when we have been forced to speak of other good actions, how commonly do we lay in a but, something or other, to abate the esteem, that is due: it were well done, if the ends were right, if from good principles, if not done in hypocrisy, &c. and by these insinuations we restrain others from loving proportionably to

the merit of the person. This is Doeg-like: he told the truth; but he insinuated as if David had an evil intention, and the priests were in the confederacy. Or we add, "we should like him well if he were not thus and thus; but he is a leper, &c. proud, covetous, &c." At feasts, if not in more solemn meetings, what liberty have we taken to speak against our brethren? When Dionysius feared Plato would revile him in the academy among his companions: "God forbid" (said Plato) "that there should be such scarcity of matter to talk of in the academy, that they should talk of thee. Believe it, we had spent our time better to warm one another's heart with the love of Christ, than to exasperate and inflame the spirits of each other against our brethren. What saith Plutarch, another heathen?" You have matter enough at home, and within, to busy yourselves about.

4. How easily have we entertained a report and credited it against brethren of different persuasions? The love of mothers makes them incredulous as to any charges laid against their children; but how seldom have we *driven away a backbiting tongue with an angry countenance*? how have we been tale-bearers; how have we encouraged the backbiter to open his pack? how have we received all the defamations he would bring us? how have we credited reports upon hearsay, without any examination? how apt are we to censure and judge before he, which is the accused, have the accuser face to face. This was the Roman law: I wish it were the Christians! Some of you learnt long ago, that it is injustice to determine without hearing both parties. Have we loved our neighbours, name and credit, as our own? May we not conclude that God will measure to us, as we have to our brethren; Is it our wisdom to believe every word? Would not David

cut off those whom we embrace? we pretend we are not the first reporters; but are not we glad the report is spread beyond recall? are not we glad that others good names are stolen away? and do not we harbor the stolen goods? When others set our neighbours names on fire, do not we look on, and gladly warm ourselves by it, and cry Aha! So would we have it? But when do we go to the defamed neighbour to hear what apology he can make for himself? were we not willing he should fall in our esteems, we would have the accuser and accused face to face.

5. How have we amplified and aggravated the offences of differing parties beyond their due proportion? For fifty have we not set down an hundred? Have not we represented that as done against light, which was done ignorantly? and that done with deliberation, which was done rashly? We have not made a difference between reigning sins, and human frailties: between sins repented of, and not repented of. How have we been guilty in drawing consequences from our adversaries assertions, and fastening such opinions on them, as we knew their souls abhorred? and yet hardly hath one of a thousand retracted these unjust charges, or humbled himself for this great iniquity before God, or man.

6. Have we silenced our characterising names even to this very day? These have tended to blow up our differences to the greater flame: these, one calls the trumpets of discord, and a main obstacle to peace.

7. Did we begin to stop breaches betimes? did not we suffer our wounds to be kept open too long? and how few yet they are, that endeavour to compose the jars and differences that are among us? When there were bickerings concerning Moses, the law, circumcision, and sacrifices; how doth Paul beseech Euodias and Syntyche? how few are like one of the fathers, who was so

much affected with the divisions of Christians, that he profest himself ready to shed his hearts blood to cement them together? I hear many outcries against division; and now it is in every man's mouth, it is time to agree; But ask them what they mean by agreement? and you will find conformity is intended: they would have you to stoop to them, even against conscience; they will not abate an inch of what they have pretended, and professed as their principle? Few intreat for peace, and those few that do indeed endeavour to hinder the strife of brethren, fare no better than Moses: he is thought to carry on a design for a party that sues for peace, and desires brotherly and amicable conferences. Many cry for peace, and commend it, but they will not be at cost for it. The cursed principle is still harboured, that it is a dishonourable thing to yield first, but that others must begin to stoop to us: whereas it is God's honour, that he stooped to us first. We are loath to sue for peace, and to beg reconciliation with those, that have been more in the offence than we. I find little condescending to remove mistakes and prejudices. If we have once offered terms of peace and reconciliation, we satisfy ourselves therein; but have not pursued and followed after peace: we have not used means upon means: this is a clear evidence of our too much indulging our discords and animosities. When there is a dislocation of one member of the natural body, if one surgeon sets it not right, we try another: and leave no means untried, till all be brought into order again. Sure our hearts are not overcome with the love of peace. I wish we could say as Luther once in an Epistle to the pastors of Strasburgh, I pray you be persuaded, that I shall alway be as desirous to embrace concord, as I am desirous to have the Lord Jesus propitious to me.

8. Have not our differences come to that height

that we have condemned those actions of dissenting brethren, which before they dissented from us we approved and commended? Demetrius of Alexandria liked Origen's making himself an eunuch, till they fell out, and then he wrote against it. Yea, have not we discommended some very good enterprises, merely because they had a hand in them? Thus some confessed that they had liked many of Luther's reformatiions, but that so contemptible a monk should have the honour of beginning them. When men are highly inflamed for some one thing, they will dislike all the party doth, whilst they are in that passion. Besides, have not we been apt to quarrel with, and dislike whatsoever is done by, a whole society, if we be fallen out with one of that society? Hath not a whole family sometimes suffered, because we have been angry with one of that family?

9. How few are there that mutually confess their faults each to other; though doubtless both sides have had their failings in such a time of darkness and temptation? But instead of this are there not mutual upbraidings, if not to the face of each other, yet (which is more criminal) behind each others backs? Do they not impute the cause of all the miseries felt and feared to such and such disorders of such parties? Who is so ingenuous as to confess, and take shame for his own, and his parties miscarriages?

10. How strong are our memories (even to this day) to retain all bitter, and unchristian passages of one party toward another? And if some have buried them: yet are there not some of the devil's agents, that are raking them out of the dust to exasperate spirits afresh, and so to widen our difference?

11. How have we suffered sin to rest upon others? and why? They are not of our church. Thou

shouldst not deal with a Turk, as thou hast dealt with Christians: nor with a beast, going astray, as thou hast with thy brother's soul. O! into what times are we fallen? That the Jews were kinder to beasts, than we are to one another: if any go astray, we help them not to return into the right way: if they perish, let them perish, for any care we take to reclaim them: if non-members, they must not be regarded. Thou shouldst not hate thy brother in thy heart, but reprove him: and not foolishly confine and narrow brotherhood to thy particular congregation, and suffer others to be damned, when thou by a faithful reproof mightest have saved them. Whilst you care so little whether God be honoured, or dishonoured by others, your zeal against sin in your own bosoms, or in your society, may justly be called in question, whose image doth it bear? Instead of reproving a Christian, that differs from us, according to the rule of Christ, for any miscarriage, that we are privy to, have not we let him run on, and then told on the house-top, what was done in secret? We hide their imperfections, whom we love, and faithfully, but secretly, admonish them; but have not some pretended an high friendship to others, on purpose to espy their liberty, that they may afterwards have an occasion to reproach them, and all their party on their account? *He that seeth his brother's face foul, and tells him not of it, hath a mind that others should see his spots as well as himself.* And is this love to thy friends? O! how have we uncovered that, which ingenuous humanity should have concealed? Can you talk so of your friends, that are most dear to you?

12. Have not we restrained prayer for such Christians, as have differed from us? Whom we love we pray for: but have not our differences been so great, that we have excluded one ano-

ther out of our prayers, unless to reproach each other before the Lord? *If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them, that sin not unto death.* How seldom are we very serious and earnest in wrestling with God for others; if in some things divided from us? if we had counted them enemies, we should have so loved them, as to have prayed for them. O that Abraham should pray so vehemently for the Sodomites, and not we for saints! That Samuel should pray for Saul, and not we for the *Lord's anointed ones!* Have not our differences interrupted not only civil, but all religious communion? Yea, have not we neglected to pray, not only for dissenting brethren, but for the reconciling of them? But how few are there, that pray heartily, feelingly, believingly, for the peace of Jerusalem; though there are many promises to encourage us therein, *that his name shall be one, and they shall worship with one shoulder, and Judah shall not envy Manasseh; nor Manasseh vex Ephraim; And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them?* Should we not also have been encouraged to pray for that, which Christ so effectually desires? Will not petitions be welcome to heaven for that, which would be the joy of all the heavenly host to see effected? Peace on earth among the saints would be the joy of God, who is the God of peace: of Christ, who is the prince of peace. May we not confidently pray for what Christ sweat and bleed.

13. How ready have we been to respect and value the gifts and ennoblements of such Christians? We have neither heartily prayed to God, that they might be useful, with all their talents, for

the good of many: nor blest the Father of lights for communicating so much to them.

14. Hath not the spirit in us lusted to envy? whom we love, we rejoice at their enjoyments; but hath not a spirit of Cain prevailed among us? Have not we envied, if others had greater acceptance with God than ourselves? Have we rejoiced at the gifts and graces of differently persuaded brethren, as if they were our own, or have not we (secretly at least) repined at others praises? Have not we been afraid that we and our party have been obscured thereby? hath not this been evident in our being more backward to speak of their graces, than of their imperfections? Do not we gaze only on the sun, and call in others to be spectators of it, when eclipsed? Do not we like kites, pass over the sound sheep and pitch upon the weak, and dead carrion? or like the butcher's dog, not touch the sound flesh, but the offals and putrified pieces? or like swine, pass over the flowers, and wallow in the mire? If we know one of a differing congregation from ours, that hath a blemish, our mouths are full of him; but others' graces, and heavenly walks we can pass over in silence.

15. Have not we refused to help such Christians? We help what we can those whom we really love: But are not we like spectators in a tragedy (Austin complains of such in his time) who mourn much to see a sad story acted; but let the play go on. True pitiful love would express itself by the hand, as well as tongue. We read of *the labour of love: love is bountiful*. We pretend to love all saints; but what do we for those that are of different persuasions from ours? If such an one be in prison, do we visit him? If naked, do we *clothe* him? If hungry, do we feed him? If we remember all the Lord's people, that are in bonds, as if we were bound with them, then do

we really love them. We love ourselves, and we are liberal to ourselves; we can bestow time, care, estate, good things upon ourselves; but not so on divided brethren. We have words at will, oil and butter in our mouths to supply them, *Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled*; but we give not those things, that are needful. Love will suffer any pains for the sake of the beloved: So Paul loved all the saints, that he was willing to spend and to be spent, for their good. Which of us hath so spent himself? Love will counsel the beloved, especially if in any strait; but God knows how little others have been beholden to us even in this way: possibly we have afterwards insultingly told them, this you should have done, and herein you failed, but as we found them in a ditch so we left them, and directed them not to a way of deliverance. The best counsel we can give is for the soul; but let the divided parties, yea and others, consider seriously and sadly how backward they have been, and are to this day, to advise to the best way for peace, holiness, and glory. If we believe such an undertaking will impair our neighbour's name, estate, or soul; yea how slow are we to interpose for the dissuading of him from so unhappy an enterprize? I should hardly think that parent loves his child well, that sees him run over a cliff, and withholds him not, what he can.

16. Have not we been so far from helping them that we have not sympathized with them? Love is pitiful. When they have been sick, when did we get over our thresholds, to inquire how it fared with them? How seldom have we felt their pains? if they be in an error, in a dangerous one, the more we should compassionate them, considering ourselves also, who have the seeds of the same errors within us, considering the blindness of our minds; how we also differ from others in some matters; how is the spirit, that leads

unto truth, &c. but have not some rejoiced, when any of a different persuasion have fallen into the bogs of Familism, Ranterism, Quakerism, &c. that they may thence draw their absurd inferences against the whole body, whereto such an one was related? Yea how little have we laid to heart the afflictions of any of God's people? Have not we been as unconcerned in their sufferings in Germany, France, Holland, Piedmont, Ireland, &c. How seldom have we had any great conflict for those whose faces in the flesh we never saw? Have not we been like Jacob's children, unmerciful enough: sat down to eat and drink, and forgot Joseph in the pit? Have not we had a late instance of this our hard-heartedness, when the plague so desolated London, and the parts adjacent? How little did we mourn with them that mourned? Perhaps fear lest the flying roll might visit us, caused us a little to put finger into the eye, I must tell you, (I wish I could weeping) that *iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold.*

17. Have not we been so far from sympathizing with them, that we have insulted over them? Real love vaunteth not itself, *is not puffed up*; but how have we vaunted over fallen brethren, fallen into misery: that is bad, but fallen into sin, that is abominable? How oft have I known some high professors making it an entertainment a banquet for their friends, to speak of the spots vanities, gestures, &c. of others different in some opinions or practices, from them when their laughter hath given evident proof what contentment they took in the infirmities of their brethren? *Ye are puffed up and have not rather mourned*, &c. said Paul to the Corinthians: and may not I say so to English professors? Have not we been worse than Dive's dogs, seeing they licked the sores of Lazarus: whilst we have rubbed and fretted them, and insulted over his miseries?

18. Have not we very unfaithfully published their secrets ? We are wont to keep the secrets of those we dearly love, especially when they charge us, and we promise so to do ; but how many of us are swift to hear, but too slow to speak of what we hear even under the roof ? Few faithful spirits, that *conceal the matter*. How many are there that creep into houses, yea farther, into bosoms, to know secrets, that they may enslave them to their wills, for fear of their publications, or else when they have got what they can of them, most wretchedly betray the trust reposed in them ? This makes me even to cry out, *trust not in a brother*.

19. Have not we been selfish in our love ? *Charity seeketh not her own*. Observe it, the most love, that is going, is publican-love : we are careless of their company, or to have any intimacy with them, from whom nothing is likely to be returned : if a professor be *rich*, he *hath many friends*, such as they be ; *but the poor is despised of his neighbour*. O ! how base and mercenary is our love ? Even your ministers, to whom you have pretended dear and high affections, yet if they be laid by, or removed at a distance from you, that you cannot have them as a pleasant song to you, how strange are you instantly to them ? How soon do you forget them ? Judas may kiss you ; but he hath a design upon you : Joab may salute ; but he is worth nothing but his own base design.

20. Hath not our love been inconstant ? Real love is abiding ; but do not we quickly exchange friends ? Do we keep them as long as an almanack to the end of the year ? Do not new picked flowers tempt us to throw by the old ? *Charity suffereth long* ; but how soon is our love quenched ? It makes a blaze : but soon is out, soon kindled, soon quenched : like children, won with

an apple, lost with a nut : how have we been at sword's point for every trifle ? Those seven ones, one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one *God and Father of all*, should have been as so many quoins to lock together all parts of the building into one ; but alas ! every extravagant, or extrinsical opinion hath broken us and our hearts to pieces. Have not we been humourish, peevish lovers ? Our love is dearly bought, and more hardly kept. Humour is like tinder, as soon on fire as touched : no love without conformity in every thing : we could hardly, bed, board, or house together, unless we all said the same thing ; we loved only whilst pleased, and our humours were not crossed, but the least unkindness, the least difference, (though our agreements were more by hundreds than our differences) would quench, or at least abate our love. *Charity is not easily provoked.* And to fulfil the law of love, it is requisite in the apostles's judgment, that we *hear one another's burthens*. But O ! ever since I can remember, what a rigid, imperious and tyrannical commanding of an uniformity in every punctilio hath there been ? Though the pretence be love to Christ's church ; yet if men would consult their own hearts, it is love of their own power and rule, and lordship over their brethren : and therefore the same party of men, when in the saddle, when uppermost, have cried for this rigid conformity, away with cursed toleration, &c. and when reduced and brought lower, have as much commended charity, love, forbearance, in matters less momentous.

Now when these things are thus amongst us, shall we sit still in silence and stupidity, and suffer the sweet and soft fire of love quite to expire, and the wild-fire of passion and contention to spread and prevail, without moving a

tongue or hand towards the repressing of the one, and reviving of the other? This were enough to make the dumb to speak; and therefore may justify my writing, when I may not speak; yea my expatiating a little, in venting my thoughts about this great evil, and the desires of my heart to redress it.

Is it nothing to us, that hereby we are in a special manner guilty of disobedience to Jesus Christ? That all Christians would love one another, was our Lord Jesus's dying charge, which he frequently inculcated, sweetly insinuated, and powerfully enforced it as a commandment, not a bare advice and counsel: It is a commandment of Christ's own prescribing, *A commandment I give unto you*: It is a commandment given, as a special love-token, in his last will and testament: It is a new commandment, *a new commandment I give unto you*: It is a most excellent commandment, in a new edition corrected and amended, from the false glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees, and enlarged from his own example; before it was only, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*; now it is *Love one another, as I have loved you*: this new commandment is not once only given, but given again, and again, and again, by our dying Lord, to intimate, that as he had one disciple, who went by the name of the disciple whom Jesus loved: so he would have a darling commandment, and that this should be it, *Love one another*; yea he calls it *These things*, as if this one thing were all things, and disobedience to this commandment, were disobedience to all.

Is it nothing to us, that hereby, as much as in us lies, we make the prayer of Christ of none effect? Christ knew the evil of heart-burnings and divisions, of wrath and bitterness against

one another (though we do not) and therefore having preached love among his disciples on earth, he sets upon praying for union from his Father in heaven, and what he insisted most upon in his sermon, that he enlargeth most upon in his prayer. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee : Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are : that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe, that thou hast sent me. : and the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them : that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know, that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.*

Is it nothing to us, that hereby we throw off Christ's distinguishing livery ? *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.* He doth not say, hereby you shall be my disciples ; but hereby it shall be known : nor doth he say, hereby I shall know : nor hereby you shall know : but hereby shall others know : nor doth he say, hereby they shall guess and conjecture ; but hereby they shall know, as by a sure and infallible sign : nor doth he say, hereby some, a very few, shall know this great secret ; but hereby all men shall know : nor doth he say hereby all men shall know, that you seem to be my disciples ; but that you are so indeed.

Is it nothing to us, that hereby we make the Jews and Heathens look on Christ as an impostor ? How can they look upon him otherwise, whilst they see his coat so full of seams, yea his body so full of rents ? Hereby we hinder the world from being convinced that Christ is sent of God : Christ therefore prayed, that his might

be one, *that the world may know, that God sent him.*

Is it nothing to us, that hereby we make (as much as in us lies) the cross of Christ of none effect, and his blood to be shed in vain? Christ not only preached up love, and prayed for it, but also paid for it. As he went from preaching up love on earth by his sermon, to pulling it down from heaven by prayer; so he went from praying to paying for it, and the price which he laid down for it, was his blood, saith a late ingenious writer. *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, &c. having abolished in his flesh the enmity, &c. for to make in himself of twain, one new man, so making peace. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body, by the cross.* Shall Christ die to break down partition walls? and will we dare to keep them up? Shall he shed his blood for peace? and shall we employ our wit and interest to blow the trumpet to war?

Is it nothing to us, that hereby we make Jews and Pagans call in question the truth of God's promises? What can they think of those promises (*that the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, they shall not hurt, nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord. That the wolf also shall dwell with the Lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.*) When the lambs cannot fold together without pushing at one another.

Is it nothing to us, that hereby we grieve our dear Lord Jesus, and the ever blessed Spirit? May we not easily imagine what a grief it is to the head, to see the members of his body renting and tearing each other? to see heirs of the same hope, those that lie together in the same bosom of election, and whose names are on his breast,

and whom he presents before his Father together in heaven, to be thus broken asunder on earth? O! methinks if we had any love to Jesus Christ, we should study to be of one affection. What Luther said once to the ministers of Nurembergh is very considerable: "Suppose (said he) you saw Jesus Christ standing bodily in the midst of you, and thus bespeaking you, What do you, O my dear children! whom I have redeemed by my blood, that you might mutually love one another. ————— There is no danger in your difference, but there is much in your dissention: do not thus sadden my spirit: do not thus spoil the holy angels of their joy in heaven: am not I more to you than all your matters of difference." How can we expect the company of the Spirit of grace and peace, whilst such fiery contentions are amongst us? Were the disciples quarrelling and contending, when the Holy Ghost fell on them? No, *They were all with one accord in one place. Where men dwell together in unity, there the Lord commands the blessing for ever.* God will not (saith a learned man) sow the precious seed of his grace and love among briars and thorns, the enemies of peace.

Is it nothing to us that hereby we do (what in us lies) to raise Sion even to the foundation thereof? The stones support the building, by being coupled together. How can the house stand, when the stones are severed, when not a stone is left joined to a stone? *Every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation: and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.*

Is it nothing to us, that hereby we make real saints the pillars of the world, weary of staying in the world: to support it any longer? It was the sight of the divisions among Christians, that made Grynæus, Melancthon, Strigelius, those

pious and precious souls weary of earth, and to wish and desire *the wings of a dove, that they might fly away and be at rest* in that place where *there is a rest remaining for the people of God*, as from all other evils, so from this of divisions and dissensions among brethren. It was the conjecture of one, that as God's first judgment against the old world was by water, against the heat of lust : so his last judgment upon the world that now is, will be by fire against the coldness of love. If this be true, how do we hasten the great and terrible day by our coldness in love one towards another ?

Is it nothing to us, that hereby we gratify the devil, rejoice the hearts of the wicked, and justify their reproaches of saints ? The great stratagem of hell is, to promote our differences, and to keep us from union : all the bones they throw among us are to set us by the ears : the devil knows that societies of Christians are immortal, if they do not kill themselves by division : *Divide & impera*, divide them, and rule them, is a maxim in hell, and among the antichristian party. *If ye bite and devour one another*, a consumption will be the consequent. Why should we be employed in the devil's work ? Hath he not instruments and tongues enough of his own ? O ! how doth antichrist get ground by the animosities and divisions among Christians ? Certainly what Tacitus saith of some in his time, we may of the Papists and all our foreign enemies, *Nihil spei, nisi per discordias habent*. All their hopes of ruining us arise from our homebred discords and divisions : Were all the arrows in one bundle, they would by trial and experience find it next to an impossibility to break them. Methinks the proud boasts of *the man of sin* should make us bury all our discords : were we but of one heart before God, and uniting our prayers,

the mountains would become plains, yea the seven hills among the rest. Sure we do not consider where, and among whom we are. Are we not in the world, where Satan rules? Shall the children quarrel in their enemies' quarters? Abraham sues for peace upon this, as a taking consideration, that *we are brethren, and the Perizite dwelt in the land*. Wicked men are spectators of our feuds and discords. The very heathen have calmed the mutinies of their soldiers, by saying "Your enemies yonder behold your mutinous behaviour. What one said prophetically some years ago, I cannot but recall: that "Unless God did stir up some in the Protestant churches, and clothe them with a mighty spirit to accommodate our differences, the end of them may be, that our enemies will laugh, when we shall weep." Have we not enemies enough, but must we be harsh and cruel to one another? we say the fire burns the hotter for the cold weather: would to God the antiperistasis were blessed, that the cold abroad, the oppositions against us, may intend our affections the more to God, to his ways, to his people. And are not the wicked justified in their reproaches of the saints, whilst they do but write after our opy?

Is it nothing to us, that hereby we are perjured, yea often perjured, as often as we have received the communion? "Christians (saith our great Usher) should remember, that as oft as they come to the Lord's table, so oft do they enter into new bonds of peace, and tie themselves with firmer knots of love together; this blessed communion being a sacred seal, not only of the union, which we have with our head by faith, but also of our conjunction with the other members of the body by love."

Lastly, Is it nothing to us, that hereby we hin-

der the forgiveness of our own iniquities? How can we hope we shall be forgiven, if we forgive not one another? How can we look that scripture in the face, *If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you : but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses?* Or that, *with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again?* Would we have God deal with us as we deal with our brethren? These, and such like considerations, have made some, even of the episcopal persuasion, to complain for want of love, and to sigh for more charity towards Christians, though of different persuasions: "That in the case of unavoidable differences among good men (saith one) there should be no more mutual charity, meekness, moderation, tolerance, and humanity expressed, &c. this is a lamentation, and will be for a lamentation." "Between the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Independent parties (saith a second), much of the acidness and sharpness of the humour would be allayed, if this policy of charitable censure and interpretation were applied on all sides, &c. I should be glad to see the beams of this candour, this kindness, this charity, shine in all faces, from all sides, that the Shibboleths of different dialects and designs, &c. might be laid aside by being all for Christ," &c. A third presseth to a charitable construction of each others' acts and intentions: because there is nothing in the world, which may not be taken with either hand, whether the right hand of favour, or the left of malice. We see the Son of God himself, in whom the prince of this world could find nothing, yet was exposed to misconstruction, *Behold a glutton*, &c. Good Lord! what uncharitable censures are men apt to pass upon each other: Let a man be strict and austere in moral

and divine duties, though never so peaceable, he is a Puritan, and every Puritan is a hypocrite. Let him be more free, and give more scope to his conversation, though never so conscionable : he is a libertine : let him make scruple of any innovated form, he is a schismatic : let him stand for the anciently received rights and government, he is a time-serving formalist.—— Let me tell you he is right, that hath a right heart to his God, what forms soever he is for. *The kingdom of God doth in meats and drinks, in stuffs or colours, or fashions, in noises or gestures : it stands in holiness and righteousness, &c.* Let us study now, not to widen, or gall, or ranckle ; but how to salve and heal,” &c. I shall conclude this chapter with beseeching, yea conjuring you in the words of the apostle Paul to the Philippians ; *if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies ; fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

CHAP. XXXIII.

The Faults of Church-members towards those of their particular Congregations.

1. **Y**OU have professed in your creed to believe the communion of saints : you have been admitted to the privileges of this communion : you thought it not safe, or good for man to be alone ; to live retired from the society of saints : you have been inrolled among the saints in Jerusalem, *which came down from above* : you

have with some solemnity engaged yourselves to be faithful to the souls of your brethren : and yet what an unprofitable hermit hast thou been in Zion ? Like a wild beast thou comest out of thy den for thy prey, *to feed upon the mountains of spices*, to enjoy the provisions of God's house ; but immediately thou retirest, and art no way serviceable to the body. It is a wonder to me how Christians can content themselves with the privileges of God's house, and neglect the mutual duties, that are incumbent on them. A learned man complains of many ministers, that they are but traditional preachers : and I fear there are too many traditional christians, who are very zealous for the practising of some duties, which they have received from their forefathers : whilst they can overlook many express commandments, obliging them to take care, as members of the natural body, do each for other. The apostle tells us, that the *meanest members in the church yet are necessary*. But alas ! how many are there, who shut up their light in dark-lanterns ? who immure themselves within their own walls ? who are so involved in worldly businesses, and have so little care and zeal for the house of God, that they no way profit, no way edify their brethren ? How can such overlook those plain express requiries of Christ by his apostle ? *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. Wherefore comfort (or exhort) yourselves together, and edify one another*, I wish I could add, as the apostle doth, *even as also ye do. For as much as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. Let all things be done to edifying. From whom (i. e. Christ) the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the ef-*

fectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. Let every one of us please his neighbour, for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself, &c. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love, and unto good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. Look not every man on his own things; but every man also on the things of others. None are excluded: it is every man's work. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Look diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. If they do not overlook, how dare they condemn, all these commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ? How can they look upon themselves as no way concerned in these duties? It is a lamentation, and should be for a lamentation, that so many church-members, like birds of prey, fly always alone; and through spiritual sloth, through a loathness to displease, through want of charity and pity to the souls of their brethren, suffer them to perish in carelessness, sensuality formality, &c. rather than they will labour to quicken, restore and save them. An ingrosser is hateful to men; But of how much sorer punishment shall ye be thought worthy, who ingross your graces, your gifts, your experiences, wherewith a church of Christ might be edified; Every man is a steward, (Give an account of thy stewardship) but,

you are stewards in an especial manner : you are stewards of the gifts of the Spirit, which are bestowed to profit withal. How dare ye *hide your talents in a napkin* ? You have a greater trust committed to you, than others have : you have souls committed to your care ; for church-members are to care even naturally one for another. If God hath two servants, and he intrusts one with his lumber, the other with his children ; and if both be negligent : sure he shall suffer the highest indignation from the Lord, who neglects the children. What ! are you afraid you shall have the less light, the less grace, the less comfort from Christ, for that others share with you ? And therefore will ye turn ingrossers and monopolists ? O ! know the more useful you are to invite the children in their father, the more you yourselves will be enriched and supplied ; and whilst you are dividing your loaves, God will act at a wonderful rate for you ; the bread will multiply ; you shall receive, whilst you are disbursing ; your light and heat will increase by your holy dispersing it.

2. How is godly conference neglected even among church-members ? What ! are you ashamed of your God ? is the speaking of grace and glory some kind of disparagement to your tongues ? When saints come together, time, precious time is devoured in backbiting, in undue, unseasonable censuring of absent persons, who are not capable of making their defence, or else in foolish impertinent discourses of worldly matters. Few, like the disciples in their journey to Emmaus, discourse of such matters, as Christ himself joins with them in, and causeth their hearts to burn : when do you warm one another's hearts, and fit each other to enter into communion with God in secret ? How do many complain of you that their hearts are estranged,

from God by converse and intimacy with you, and that they lose their affections by keeping up correspondencies with you? and therefore count it their wisdom to retire into their closets, rather than mispend precious hours in foolish communications with such barren, frothy, empty professors. How many weak Christians are there, who are not acquainted with the wiles of Satan, and they sit down pensive and dejected, thinking no condition like theirs, and conclude hereupon that they are none of God's children; whom (if you were spiritual, pitiful, active and free to acquaint them with your own experiences, that you have been tempted as they) you might succour under their temptations, and comfort with the comforts, wherewith you have been comforted, and ease them by hearkening to their doubts and complaints, and shewing them a way to deliver their souls. Were you of a Christ-like spirit, you would *not break these bruised reeds, nor quench these smoking flaxes*; but rather blow up their graces, and labour to scatter and disperse those fogs and mists, which overcloud their souls: you should be eyes to the blind; but you are not: you should be of a merciful spirit to all souls: more especially to the souls of all saints, most especially to the souls of those saints, to whom you are peculiarly related; but you are not. In the old law God took care of asses, *if they lay under a burthen, Israel was to help them*. Doth God take care for beasts? and will not ye for men, for saints, for the *redeemed of the Lord*? God requires of you, that you comfort the feeble-minded. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. Christ expects his own with increase. *They that feared the Lord spake often one to another*, to comfort one another with the promises of God made to his people,

against the flourishing of the wicked, and overflowing of ungodliness : *and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, &c.* the Lord books that good service, he put it upon record ; but though the Lord hearkeneth and hears, yet he seldom finds us so employed : our neglects are sealed up in his bag. I pray God we may lay it to heart, repent and reform. Bernard's complaint may justly be revived : " Not a word of the scriptures, nothing of the salvation of the soul ; but trifles and toys, laughter, and words as light as the wind, eat up the time." I know there have been too many Uzza's amongst us, who have curiously desired to handle the ark, thinking of themselves more highly than they ought to think, and like the ambitious sons of Levi, taking too much upon them, whereby the ministry hath suffered much contempt. The Lord forgive these daring Phaetons, who have set the world in a flame hereby : but let not us run from one extreme into another. Let us give to the ministry their due ; and yet not neglect to *build up* ourselves in our *most holy faith*. Mutual duties should be exercised between Christian and Christian : the apostle is express for it in the passages already quoted : I shall add one more, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.* O ! if God would be with me so far, as to make me an instrument to prevail with you to go, and visit one another, and stir up one another, that *knowing the terrors of the Lord, you may persuade men.* O ! bewail thy unserviceableness, thy private spiritedness, thy want of love and bowels to others ; especially now, when the ministerial help fails to such a degree, and when there is so great an apostacy. Sure, there is no time, wherein Christian-fellowship is more called for,

and wherein it may be more profitable, than at this time ; but alas ! how are the wise, as well as the foolish virgins, asleep, generally secure, without action, no way useful to each other, no more than they are, who are fast asleep in their beds of rest ? O ! how few are there who are like Jonathan and David ? how few enter into a brotherly promise to exhort one another, to call one another to account, to tell one another their fears, to know of one another their growth in religion ? We are proud, and loath to have our nakedness appear : yea some of us have few stories to tell of God's goodness and bounty to our souls, and we hate a discovery, how low, earthly, vain, backsliding we are ; hence we are reserved to each other ; but *God will bring forth the hidden works of dishonesty.*

3. How is fraternal correction neglected or spoiled in the managings ? Some totally neglect reproving their brethren : Gallio-like, they little care for these things, they are little concerned whether God be honoured, or dishonoured.

Others delay admonition. The flesh is backward to this self-denying work, and so the many circumstances, which should bring the offender to repentance, are forgot : the offender is also hardened in his sin. He thinks by thy silence, thou art altogether like unto him : so he judgeth of God's silence, *these things hast thou done, and I kept silence, thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself* : so he judgeth of thy silence. It is much easier to fetch out a spot of ink from a cloth the day it is stained, than afterwards. Sin, like a mole, will quickly bury itself, and the longer let alone, the harder it is to dig it up. The longer a disease is let alone, the harder cured : Chronical diseases are seldom a credit to the physician. Besides if you neglect the reproof this day or hour, perhaps by the

next he will commit the same sin again ; for either he knows it not to be a sin, or in case he knows it, yet every new act doth strengthen the habit of sin. It is the nature of sin to blind the mind, to stupify the conscience, and to harden the heart. *Exhort therefore one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* If the sinner add to sin, put that to your account for neglecting the ordinance of God for his reduction : if he loseth the favour of God, and neglects hereupon all private communion with the Lord, put that to thy account : if at length he becomes impudent in sin, so that like a maniac, he feels not the pricks of sharp admonition, put all this to your account, because you have delayed to cure, to heal, to save the soul of your brother. A timely reproof might have saved a soul, and covered a multitude of sins. Besides have you time at your command, that you with Felix, will do your duty at a more convenient season : Mayest not thou die ? or the offender die ? and both in sin, thou in the sin of omission, and he in the sin of commission unrepented of, before the day comes, wherein thou art resolved to tell him roundly of his fault ? Why art not thou trembling with fear of blood-guiltiness ? Is soul-murder no sin with thee ? Or have you the Holy Ghost at command ? Without the Holy Spirit's assistances and concurrence, your labour will be in vain, you will get a blot by reproving, the delinquent will fly in your face, hate you for telling the truth, he will add sin unto sin, and perhaps put you into a flame too : and must the Holy Ghost dance attendance on you ? If you observe his hour you must go presently whilst the wound is fresh and bleeding ; but if you neglect his calls, it is a question, whether your hour will be God's.

Others miscarry in reproof. Some reprove, but not privately : though Christ be so express for it, *If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone* ; though the law of charity binds us to cover our brothers' nakedness, as much as we can. *Love covereth all sins*, yet some, Doeg-like, backbite their neighbour, and tell it to every one save him, who, should hear of it. How few modestly, affectionately and humbly, in the most private manner communicate their fears of sins, decays and infirmities to the supposed delinquents ? Are not most too forward sinfully and wickedly to divulge their undue suspicions to others, whereby the names of some suffer, souls lie neglected, prejudices and heart-burnings are promoted, schism is made in the body of Christ. Though the law of wisdom bind us not to use more means than needs must, if gentle, private reproofs will serve to reclaim, not to blazon infirmities, yet professors through pride, envy, want of charity, at least want of wit, publish on the house-top what is done in a corner. Herein we do, as we hate to be dealt with, were it our own concernment. Hereby we make the offender to hate us, and beget in him due prejudices against us, viz. that we thirst to draw the blood of his name : yet how many church-members are peccant herein ? It will be hard to make him believe thou comest to heal his soul, if thou hast already wounded his name. Have not some church-members been for bringing it immediately to the church ? Hereby innumerable evils ensue, many are grieved, many offended, the party that is impeached stands on his guard, pleads for his sin, extenuates it, or is strengthened in his sin by the uncharitable proceeding and irregular acting of the brother, who first took cognizance of the miscarriage, and so Judah justifies Samaria.

Others reprove in order that those injuries that have been offered to them may be recompensed, rather than that their brother's soul may be healed: and it appears herein, if the wrong done them, may be remedied, little do they heed, whether there be any other repentance. They reprove not to gain their brother, but to make gain of him: and therefore, Jehu-like, they drive furiously in their own cases, but in God's they are dumb and null enough.

Other busy-bodies would be thought very tender of Christ's honour, *they tithe mint and anise, &c.* they reprove such things as are disputable, and neglect to reprove, where there are too many just accusations to lay in. They will be very severe in censuring their brethren, for their hair, clothes, or some controverted recreations; and yet let them alone to live in worldliness, sensuality, lukewarmness, pride, sloth, &c.

Others are so magisterial in their reproofs, as if they had forgotten that they are in the body, as if they had no native corruption remaining from them, they want the spirit of meekness, they have forgotten the apostle's advice, *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, &c.* O! how haughtily do some carry it towards offending brethren! I wish you would cast the first stone at yourselves. If you are not guilty of the same offence, yet you are of others, at least you have the seed of the same sin within you. O that offending brethren, might know that it is only conscience of duty, that brings you to them, and that it is love to their souls puts you upon such displeasing work to your flesh; but wo and alas! how few will condescend? The work is not managed with that humility as it ought, and therefore no brother is gained.

Others are so light, frothy, and unserious in this business, that they spoil all. They do not invoke God to accompany them in the work, they do not cry out, *who is sufficient?* They forget it is soul-work they are employed in, they forget how abortive such labours have been, they do not set upon it with that fear and trembling, which they should. *Few rebuke with authority*, as having God's glory, and men's everlasting salvation in their eye: and hence, when they come off from this work, their conscience smites them, that they have been no more serious and fervent in a matter that concerns life and death.

Few continue their admonitions, and follow them, till the delinquent be brought to confession repentance and amendment. We soon tire, and put the ill names of dogs and swine upon our offending brethren, to excuse our sloth, and to take off that diligence about their souls, which their fullness, and hardness of heart calls for. We should in meekness instruct them, *though they oppose themselves*: we should bear with their present stubbornness and abuses, and wait if *God peradventure will give them repentance*: We forget how many years God waited on us, though we were stout: stubborn and refractory, how patient and long-suffering he was unto us. Though the more we love, the less we are beloved: though men even fly in our faces: yet we should do as our Lord, and his ministers, not presently *shake off the dust of our feet against them*.

5. How few behave themselves christianly under reproof? When men come to you from the great God, to discharge the duties they owe to your souls, your behaviour is such, that none will meddle with such patients, to dress their wounds, if the Lord had not charged them with this commission.

How few receive a reproof kindly and affecti-

onately? This makes me fear, that there are more hypocrites in churches, than we are aware of. It is a great mercy to be reproved, *As many as I love I rebuke.* To sin against reproof, is aggravated wickedness. *The revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all.* It is an argument of hatred, not to reprove, *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, &c.* Yet how are they counted turbulent, pragmatical, void of affection, rigid and censorious, who will not let him go on in their sin. *He that hates reproof shall surely die.* There is not a sadder omen, that God hath an endless controversy with thee. *I know* (saith the prophet to Amaziah) *the Lord hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast not hearkened to my reproof.* Others seem to hearken to the reprover, and give him verbal thanks for his plain dealing: but from that day their hearts boil inwardly, and they are filled with prejudice, which will express itself, when ever it meets with a fair opportunity. How few do engage some friend, to be a faithful friend to them, to be open-hearted to them, in telling them their faults? We are so overrun with self-love, that we think no stander by can discern so much as we, and we are so unwilling to be censured: that we stand aloof from having such a looking-glass near us, to reflect our spots to us: few, with David, would count it a kindness, for the righteous to smite them.

How few do amend upon a solemn serious reproof? How few retire to their closets, and there upon their knees bless God for emboldening them to tell them of their sins, and there beg pardon and strength to reform, and enter into a religious vow by the grace of God to amend whatever is amiss?

5. Most professors seek to please themselves and not their neighbour. A man would think they never read, *we that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one please his neighbour for his good to edification; for even Christ pleased not himself, &c.* Professors are self-willed, they will walk to the utmost of their liberty, and if others be offended, they little care for grieving and stumbling their weak brethren. They will tell you in the pride of their hearts and loftiness of their spirits, the weak must be satisfied: But what if they cannot? O! how opposite are professors to the apostle's condescending frame? They think that in different circumstantial things the weak should follow the strong, and therefore slight what they think of their actions. But what saith the apostle? *Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.* "A firm and full knowledge of our liberty in things indifferent," (saith a learned man) if it be separated from charity, is apt to swell the mind with pride, and make men to despise; and set at naught weak, doubting, and scrupulous brethren, but charity is careful to avoid what may stumble the weak, and to cause them to fall into sin, and therefore *judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling or occasion to fall in his brother's way by the use of indifferents.* . *Hast thou faith, concerning the lawfulness of the use of things indifferent?* (for of them the apostle speaks) *have it unto thyself before God, make not a vain publication thereof, to the exasperating, grieving, or stumbling of the weak, who may by thy example, even against conscience, the same liberty that thou didst, and so through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, i. e. thy using this liberty hath a tendency to destroy him.* You may think this is no great matter; but the same apostle in-

forms you,^s that you hereby *you sin against Christ, you destroy the work of God*, the soul of thy brother, and no man on earth can privilege you from the wrath of God, if you *destroy them with your meats* (with the use of your liberty) *for whom Christ died*, and therefore the apostle professeth, *if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*" O! that men were so humble as Paul, in the condescension of their charity; but alas! all *men seek their own things*: if they are satisfied concerning the lawfulness of the things, they look no farther: they little mind the souls of their brethren; but are securing themselves some outward peace, and earthly advantages, *Few naturally care for the good of others*, for the glory of God, and the edification of their brethren.

6. How are Christians valued and preferred by externals, rather than by internals? By gold-rings, by outward honours and privileges, rather than by their graces? They who should have most of your esteem, love and respect, have least. A rich formalist's company is more prized, than an humble, mortified, poor Christian's. The miscarriage that was in the apostle's days, is descended to this age, and is a blot upon many of the professors of it: *O my brethren! have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.* How are men's judgments blinded by some external glory and appearance, so that a little in a great, rich, honourable man, is counted much; and much grace in a poor man is despised, over-looked, and accounted but little? How do the rich contemn the poor. How are the poor neglected in visits? But a rich, though formal professor, shall have many friends. How common is it for the rich to enjoy ordinances together, and exclude the poor? You go

to the houses of the rich, but seldom go over the threshold of the poor : and yet what said Christ to him that bade him ? *When thou makest a dinner or supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee ; but when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed ; for they cannot recompense thee ; but thou shalt be recompensed at the-resurrection of the just.* You do not value men by their eminency in grace, but in parts and worldly endowments : as if gold did set men off more than grace. Those who have been most of Cæsar's image, are held in higher reputation, than those who have most of God's image. What a reflection is this upon the great and blessed God ? Paul durst *know no man after the flesh* ; yet dare you esteem men by their fleshly greatness in the world. When you should fix your affections, where you see most grace, you are taken where you see either most of the world, or most gifts, prudence, learning, or most morality. You know, that you *bestow not most honour on the uncomely parts*, on them who have at least of worldly privileges, though the apostle, yea God expects it. How rough and rigorous are you to a poor man, if overtaken in a fault ? how is his offence aggravated ? how severely is he censured ? But if a rich man's transgression be the same, or more to be aggravated from the light it hath affronted, and from the danger of its scandal ; yet how is it past by, extenuated, if not excused and pardoned ? O ! This having men's persons in admiration, over reverencing men for worldly things, is a great disparagement to the grace of God, as if riches and honours were more excellent than religion and grace : They who are highly descended, they who are highly descended, or who relate to

the courts of princes, or who have stores in their houses, are in greater esteem than others, who are descended from above, who are related to the God of heaven, who are favourites in the new Jerusalem, and who have store of grace in their hearts. O my Brethren, *If there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, and there cometh also a poor man in vile raiment, and you have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, &c. are not you partial in yourselves?* Have not you made a difference, a groundless difference, a difference grounded on carnal respects, and not upon solid reason? Are not you become judges of evil thoughts? Have not you made your judgment of such persons, according to the dictate of your own evil thoughts, and not according to the rule of the word? O! how seldom do professors value and respect as God doth. Let rich professors be sick, or under any other stroke of God's hand, what ado is there? what running to him? what sending after him, what endeavours to comfort him, But O! how are the poor of the church despised? Little sending to them, though they want necessities for their bodies, in the time of their visitation, and their souls are ready to sink, for want of a word in season. Your frequently visiting of some, when under God's hand, and seldom resorting to others, when in the same extremity, evidenceth, that you despise the poor, yea, are not you ashamed to be in the company of a mean Christian? or to call a poor Christian, brother? to own any such near relation to him? And yet *the Lord is not ashamed to call such, brethren: Go to my brethren, &c.* But wo and alas! the same mind is not in us, which was in Christ Jesus: *Learn of me; for I am holy.* But we are proud and haughty, and we learn of the high and mighty of the earth to despise others of a lower condition than ourselves. The proud

rich man can be content to claim kindred of Abraham, he calls him, Father Abraham; but you read not that ever he said, Brother Lazarus. "It will not serve us, nor save us" (saith a late Bishop of England) "to be able to say, Abraham is our father, except we will charitably acknowledge the poorest Christian, even Lazarus for our brother." Besides, how soon is a rich formalist admitted to fellowship? How hardly the godly, if poor?

7. How do they who count themselves Christians of the highest form, who have had great acquaintance with Christ and his ways, who have had a long experience of Christ's sweetness, and Satan's deceits, keep by themselves, with the neglect of the lambs, of them who are but of yesterday, and know little of the mind of God? How do we slight them (Christ did not so) who have but a mite or two for to cast into the treasury, I mean, who can contribute but little to their gifts or graces. They that are poor in spirit, as well as poor in the world, have but very little respect now adays: whereas we should treasure and respect the smallest dust of gold and pearl: we should resemble the Lord Jesus Christ: his greatest care seems to be of the lambs. *Feed my lambs.* The children in the cradle, and when they begin to take their feet should then be most dandled, should then be mostly held up, they then should be never out of hand. If ye are fathers, ye are unnatural ones, if ye throw off the care of all the children, that need your care, and take care of them that need it not. As *grace*, so growth in *grace*, is given to edify the body of Christ, the eye is not for itself, but for the blind members, to lead them in paths of righteousness. Your care should be like God's, his care is for the least fly, as well as for the greatest of the creatures. Christ did not will the salvation of one believer more than

another, he died equally for all, all believers stand alike justified through the blood of Christ, Christ knocks at the poor man's door as well as the rich, if Christ makes any difference, it is in this, the poor weak Christian hath more expressions of his love and affection, than the strong have; he shews most pity to the greatest object of pity, to those that are in greatest want: yea, the young saint at his first conversion, when he lately dropt from the womb of the gospel, when he is but a babe in Christ, he hath more kisses and embraces, more joy and comfort, than (perhaps) he meets with till he be a grown man, an old man in Christ, till he be not only a gracious, but a glorified saint. The very philosopher observes that by nature parents are still carried with their greatest affections to the child that is youngest; because that is commonly most indigent, that is most caressed. I wish there was more of this nature even among supra-natural Christians. It is lamentable to see how little honour is bestowed upon the weaker vessels, and how few there are to be found, that *carry the lambs in their bosoms* (next their hearts) *and gently lead those that are with young.*

8. How little compassion is shewed to fallen brethren: to such as are overtaken with a fault, yea with many? When their hearts, like the sluggard's field, are overgrown by weeds, we do not lend them our spade, and mattock, and knife: we do not labour to pull the brands, that are half burnt, out of the fire: to save ourselves this labour, we deem them cast-aways, and if there were no hope of their resitution and salvation, we never more look after them, to be sure, we do not as the blessed apostle John did, who an Eusebius relates in his ecclesiastical history) ran after the backslidden professor, who was turned

an highwayman, to take him by holy guile, and to recover him out of the snares of hell. We carry it, as if we held, that sins committed after conversion were unpardonable. Art thou a stranger to thy own heart? If not, thou knowest God pitieth thee, though thou fallest seven times a day, and it ill becomes thee, who hast been so oft holpen out of the deep ditch, to deny help to thy brother, that lies there, and perhaps will perish, if none be more merciful than thyself. Are there no solemn engagements upon thy soul towards thy neighbour? Will not God take thee by the throat for thy unmercifulness? *O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all thy debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst thou not had compassion upon thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?* Verily the Lord is wrath with you: and if this be not amended, *he will deliver you to the tormentors, till you shall pay all that is due unto him.* O! Repent of your defectiveness in this thing. Multitudes are hastening to the value of decision, multitudes are departing from their former profession, some of them are become scandalous: their sins will lie at your doors, and their blood too, if you, through unfaithfulness, or through negligence, or through fainting, endeavour not to restore them, to set the bones again, that are unhappily dislocated. *Ye which are spiritual restore, &c.* Are ye all carnal? are none of you spiritual? If there be one, here is work for him, as he will answer the contrary at his peril.

9. On how uneasy and sinful (because unwarrantable) accounts, do many withdraw from the communion of their brethren? What, have not they read, or heard, *Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is?* It was then dangerous not to separate: but it was more dangerous to separate? not to separate was dangerous to the outward man; but to separate

was dangerous to the inward man. Whenever you hear of Demas, that *he hath left us*, the next news you will hear of him, is, *he hath embraced this present world*. If the devil can; like a subtle cutter on the road, draw thee off from thy company, he will soon cut the throat of thy profession. It is no wonder to hear a house is robbed, that stands alone from neighbours. *Two are better than one*. The church of God is compared to a city, the weak walls of the houses therein, would never endure a blustering wind; but by their neighbourhood and contiguity, they succour each other: But when one stands divided the next news you may have to hear of, is a fall, and if it be a towering house, the fall is great. And yet alas! upon every prejudice and discontent, if one brother falls out with another, presently the whole congregation is threatened with the loss of the prejudiced and discontented party's company, and condemned for the miscarriages of one, and perhaps the supposed offender hath not the liberty to know his offence, in order to his repentance, nor the church regularly acquainted therewith.

10. The last great evil among church members, that I shall mention, is, Their not withdrawing from every brother that walks disorderly, when under censure. How solemnly is this required by the apostle? *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother, that walks disorderly*. Who can tell what blessed effects of God's own censures their eyes might have seen, had not professors been herein guilty? By a general dislike the person censured might soon be convinced and humbled. Undoubtedly it was your duty to have added weight unto the discipline of Christ, what you could, and to discountenance those, whom the Lord had discarded

Instances are not wanting of such as God hath brought to repentance by the strangeness of such as were once their fellow members. Possibly you may be condemned for such a carriage, but if ever God bring such censured persons to repentance, though it be upon their death-bed, though it be in a foreign country, God will not suffer them to die quietly till they have acquitted, yea justified your carriage towards them.

CHAP. XXVII.

The Miscarriages of Professors towards Sinners.

1. **M**AY not too much familiarity with profane wretches be justly charged upon church-members? I know man is a sociable creature; but that will not excuse saints as to their carelessness of the choice of their company. The very fowls of the air, and beasts of the field, love not heterogeneous company: "Birds of a feather flock together." I have been afraid that many who would be thought eminent, of an high stature in grace and godliness, yet see not the vast difference there is between nature and regeneration, sin and grace, the old and the new man, seeing all company is alike unto them. And is it not thus with thee? Is it not all one, whether thou art with a child of God, or with a child of the devil? Are not those fit companions for thee, who slight and rebel against God every day?

O! how few consult and believe the scriptures, setting forth the enmity of wicked men against God's people? The scripture tells us, *They eat*

up God's people, as bread, which implies a strange inclination in them to devour the saints, and that they take as great delight therein, as an hungry man in eating, and that it is natural to them to molest them : The scripture compares them, for their hateful qualities, to the lions and bears, to foxes for subtlety, to wild bulls, to greedy swine, to scorpions, to briars and thorns, (grievous and vexing things.) The scripture represents them as industrious and unwearied in their bloody enterprizes, they cannot sleep without doing mischief : Herodias had rather have the blood of a saint, than half a kingdom : Haman would pay a great fine to the king, to the scattered Jews (who keep not the king's laws) may be cut off. Wicked men will run the hazard of damning their own souls, rather than not fling a dagger at the apple of God's eye : though they know, what one word (Aha) cost ; yet they will break through all natural, civil, and moral obligations to ruin God's people : the Holy Ghost calls them *implacable men, fierce and headstrong* : they are like the *hot oven* for *fury*, like the *sea* for *boundless rage* : yet *who hath believed this scripture report* ?

Did we believe what enemies all wicked men are unto all saints, “ We should not lean to our own prudence and discretion to secure us from any danger by these men : we would get an ark to secure us from the deluge of their wrath : if at any time we be cast among them and delivered, we would bless God with the three children, that the hot fiery oven did not consume us : we would not wonder, when we hear of any of their barbarous cruelty ; but rather wonder at God's restraining them every day : we would be suspicious of receiving hurt, when cast among light and frothy companions : we would shun their company, as we do lions and scorpions :

we would never commit any trust or secret into their hands ; we would not be light-hearted, whilst in their society : we would not rely on their promises any more than we would on the promise of the devil, their father : we would long for heaven to be delivered from the *tents of Kedar* : we would not count any of the saints secured from danger, though related to any great wicked man : we would not twist ourselves with them by matching ourselves or children to these sons and daughters of Belial : neither would we make choice of devils to be our servants."

How few do believe what a quarrel God hath with wicked men ? And that not only with the loose, but the formal and hypocritical also ? If we did, we would tremble as much to be among them, as to be in a house, that is falling : we would endeavour to *save ourselves from this untoward generation*. The apostle would not so have adjured them, so charged, so entreated them, had he not known the danger of wicked company. *God is angry with the wicked every day ; his bow is bent, his arrows are on the strings*, the instruments for their ruin are all prepared. And is it safe to be there where the arrows of God are ready to fly about our ears ? How was the apostle afraid to be in the bath with Cerinthus ? *Depart* (saith God by Moses) *from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, lest ye be consumed in all their sins*. How have the *baskets of good figs* suffered with the *bad* ! Is it not prejudicial to the gold to lie with the dross ? Lot had been ruined by his neighbourhood to the Sodomites, if God had not wrought wonderfully for his deliverance. Will you put God to work miracles to save you from your ungodly company ? It is dangerous being in the road with thieves, whilst God's hue and cry of ven-

geance is at their backs. *A companion of fools shall be destroyed.* The very beasts may instruct you to consult better for your security, the very deer are afraid of a wounded chased deer, and therefore for their preservation thrust him out of their company.

How few believe their own experiences, what they have suffered by the company of the ungodly? It had been better we had gone to the pest-house, and eat and drank with persons infected with the plague, even whilst the sore and botch was running on them, than to accompany with wicked men: our bodies would have been endangered only by the one; but our souls are by the other. Is not *the poison of asps under their tongues*? Doth not the devil act them? Doth he not *work effectually in the children of disobedience*? Doth he not inform them? Is there any breath that is not infectious, coming from their lips? How soon could Joseph rap out an oath by living with Pharaoh's courtiers? It was not long time, that Peter was (unnecessarily, without a call) in the high-priest's hall, and how quickly do we hear him curse and swear, and deny his lord and master? We are insensibly ensnared, and defiled, by wicked men, as we are blacked and discoloured by lying long under the hot and scorching sun-beams. Do not we yet know and feel how *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*, and that *one sinner destroys much good*, and that those that were *mingled among the heathen, learned their ways*? Have not you found, after keeping such company, your hearts have been dead, dull, straitened, loath and unwilling to come into God's presence? "Is it difficult (saith a late ingenious writer) even to a miracle to keep God's commandments and evil company too." How suddenly after your soul-refreshments in your closet-communion

have you lost all your heats, and spiritual fervencies, which you had in secret, and have instantly cooled by going forth into cold and corrupt air? When a saint hath been in private ravished with the love of God, and the joys of heaven, and afterwards meets with company, which neither doth, nor can speak one word of such matters, what a damp is it to him? What a quenching (as it were) of the Spirit of God in him? Nay, is not that that true which one saith, that "the people of God do generally lose more by worldly men (that are of a blameless conversation before men) than they lose by wicked and profane men?" O! how oft hath communion with carnal men been at least an occasion of blotting your evidences? and of your suspecting the truth of your own graces, whilst you have omitted the duties of admonition and reproof, when there was a call thereto? O! how oft have you said, if I cannot suffer such a man's frowns and displeasure, and therefore have omitted my duty to their souls, and durst not appear for God against their sins, how shall I deny myself in greater matters? How shall I suffer at a stake for Christ? How shall I *resist to blood, fighting against sin*? You hold the wolf by the ear, whilst among them: if you reprove them, you get a blot; if not, you fear, you are too cowardly to be enrolled among the saints, I will acquaint you with an observation of mine: When I have seen a Christian fall into an intimacy with vain and erroneous company, I have counted it a mark of a backsliding heart, and have found it so too oft; and no wonder, for we ourselves count it a disgrace to us to accompany with them, who associate with people suspected for uncleanness and dishonesty, and so doth the Spirit of God, who will not partake in the scandal of such association: verily, he will

not be a partner with you when you are not choice of your fellowship.

How few consider, how they harden wicked men, by an intimacy with them, whereas withdrawalment from them, might be a means to make them ashamed? Whilst we are merry and jovial with them, we make them believe their condition is not deplorable, their danger is not great; whereas if we shunned them, as we would a bowed wall, whilst they remain enemies to the Lord, this might do them good, for the startling of them, and rousing of them, out of their unhappy security, and strong delusions, wherein they are held.

2. May not neglect of discharging the duties owed to wicked men, whilst in their company, be also justly charged upon church members? Professors carelessness of the perishing condition of the souleven of the vilest, is a sin much to be lamented. It is an iron age we live in, and men's hearts are strangely hardened, as to any pity they shew to the multitudes, who are in a natural and damnable condition. Methinks you should reflect on the misery of an unconverted state, whilst you yourselves were so lately in it.

Are not you convinced, that those with whom you converse daily, have reasonable, immortal souls, capable of eternal life or misery? Have not they the same common nature with you? Are there not (at least) many civil bonds, wherein you stand related to them? Doth not their misery call aloud for your compassions? Are they not *in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity*? Have they yet any part or fellowship in the pardon of their sins? The endeavouring to heal the backslidings of Christians, though a very necessary work, is not so necessary (for they will surely be pardoned and healed, they are not in such hazard of damnation) as to endeavour *to open*

the eyes of these poor blind wretches, and *to turn them from the power of Satan unto God*. Would you not make more haste to cure a man, that is taken with a swooning fit, than one that hath a little swelling in his finger? I wonder you are no more affected with the miseries that attend your unregenerate friends and acquaintance, who must suddenly be converted, or damned: methinks you should pity them the more: because they pity not themselves. Methinks the value that Christ hath put upon souls, by bleeding for them, the ransom that he hath given for miserable man, and the unwearied pains he takes for the reducement of fallen man, should teach us to open our lips, to give some directions and counsels to them, who are within a stride of hell, but a breath between them and eternal ruin: yet how are God's people straitened towards these forlorn and miserable, undone, condemned creatures? Though they are under the curse of the law, though the sentence of death be passed against them, and is ready to be executed every moment; yet you exhort them not to *flee from wrath to come*: if they will perish, they may perish, for any spiritual contribution that you will afford them. It grieves me sometimes, to see how God's people eat up their own and others' time, with vain, frothy, and unsavory words: when they should be speaking some rousing, startling words of hell and damnation, of the necessity of regeneration, of eternity, of the foolish choice men make in preferring *the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season*, before eternal joys; of the deceits of the heart, of the cheats of the devil, of the malignity of sin, of the curse of the law, &c. they are talking of this fashion, or of that, they are perhaps censuring one another, but endeavouring nothing for the undeceiving their deluded companions. You

cannot but know what advantages you have by your intimacies with them, to deliver that to them, which they will receive from you, when Satan perhaps hath imbittered them against their ministers, so that all pulpit-counsels and reproofs are lost upon them. Besides you are in private with them and you know by yourselves how loath, how backward you were, to apply the truths of God to your own souls, but you, as Nathan to David, may go and say, *Thou art the man, Thou the woman* : you may hear their pleas for themselves, and so have an opportunity to confute them ; whereas they are reserved to their ministers, though they have been friendly, earnestly and frequently invited to a Christian conference : and yet how do you neglect all these opportunities of serving the necessities of your friends : you pretend love unto them ; but how can you see the blind before your eyes tumbling into the lake of hell, and yet not call on them to return and live ? It is admirable, that you should think you have the divine nature within you, and yet be void of compassions to these miserable objects, who lie wounded before you, wherever you go or come. O ! methinks, when you enter the house of an unregenerate, you should thus meditate, “ Now have I an opportunity to save a soul from hell, to have a greater conquest than Cæsar or Alexander could boast of : now may I shew myself a friend of God, by pleading his rights to the creature : now may I have an occasion to make all the angels of heaven laugh and sing, and all the cursed devils to roar, by saving a lost soul.

And will you see these wounded in your way, and pass them by with an unmerciful spirit ? *If you see your brother have need of outward things, (much more if needing grace, the image of, and peace with, God) and you shut up your bowels of*

compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in you? You have some pity left, when you see a man fallen under his horse, or struggling for life upon the waters, or in a house on fire, your bowels are turned within you ; but alas ! here are they that are dropping into the lake of fire every moment, that are dragged up and down, from one lust to another, by the devil, (a sorer bondage by far) and yet you do not pity them. O ! pity them, pity them ; *Go over to Macedonia and help them.* It is a grief to my soul, to consider how dull, how useless Christians are, in the towns and villages where Providence hath cast them : if they meet with a man, they will not so much as ask, whether he be bound for heaven or hell ? whether he knows the necessity of the new birth, yea or no ? whether he hath left sin, as his greatest burden, whether he be willing of Christ, and salvation by him, upon his own terms ? Nay, professors will not so much as counsel them to read a good book, or lend them one, if they are poor and unable to buy : they will be at no cost to save a soul, that is really of more worth than a world. How is it that you account yourselves Christians, whilst you have no higher esteems of souls ? Or how can you have any assurance, that you hate sin, whilst you labour not the removal of it, in whomsoever you find it ? If you see men trifling away their time, why do you not put them upon redeeming their time ? If you find them lovers of pleasures, why do not you invite them, and press them, to look after cordial joy and truth, and the true pleasures, that are at God's right hand ? If you are the subjects of Christ, how can you endure treason against him, and not suppress it ? I will never believe, that man ever mourned for sins of his own, that doth not for sins of others ; or that he ever hated sin in himself, that doth

not endeavour to ruin it in others' souls, as well as in his own. Be ashamed of your pretensions, as if you had hearts of flesh, when you have hearts of stones, the hearts of tygers, the hearts of infidels; or else you would pity the miserable unconverted souls. And what, if they desire not your help, the more need you have to pity them: the less awakened they are out of their cursed security, the more miserable and dangerous is their state. O! put on the bowels of Jesus Christ, carry not yourselves in an high, proud way, in a lofty, magisterial way, towards these poor souls: do not think thou hast discharged duty towards them, by running into a corner, and backbiting them for blindness, hardness, contempt of Christ, &c. but rather help them to some of your eye-salve, that they may see.

Consider, you have talents, and account you must for them, and bethink yourselves, whether you may not give a better account, by endeavouring to reduce these poor souls, that are straying to hell, than by letting them alone to damn themselves: consider sadly what answer you will make, when Christ shall arise and plead with you, when Christ shall say, *Where is thy brother?* Will Cain's answer serve, *Am I my brother's keeper?* Will not Christ reply to you? "Did not I come from heaven on purpose to redeem these perished souls? Did not I charge you to *exhort one another daily? to do good to all?* Did not I furnish you with wisdom and experience, that you might be able and ready to help others? Did not I by wonders of providence prolong your days, that you might be useful? Did not I give you an interest in the affections of your neighbours, that you might be as *the dew*, and as *the rivers of waters to the parched ground?* that you might be the *light and salt of the earth?* Nay, did not I remove the

ministry, (among other weighty grounds) to try your affections to perishing souls? And is this your answering all my designs and expectations, to rail at them, as the ungodly party, and not to endeavour to make them better?" O! Consider how sad your case will be, if the blood of thousands of souls shall be lain at your doors, for your neglects, for your carelessness, for your being worse than Balaam's ass: for he once reprov'd, perhaps you have never. How do you know, but a few words of yours might be as forcible as Jonah's to Nineveh, as the Samaritan woman's was to the city? Is this to *love thy neighbour as thyself*? Dost love thyself, and not regard thy soul? And canst thou love thy neighbour, and not endeavour to save him from perishing? to pull the brand out of the fire? Have you so learned Christ? When our Lord dwelt in flesh among us, was he dumb before sinners, as you are, when he saw the multitude wanting bread, did not he deal forth the bread of life to them? did not he prefer this work before his meat and drink? had not he compassion for the ignorant? did not he enlighten poor ignorant souls, and reprove the hypocrisy of others? when he went into the publicans' houses, did not preach of the kingdom of God unto them? And hath not he given you an example, that you should do as hath done? Should not you make it a matter of conscience to write after so great, so safe, so glorious a copy? to follow so worthy a leader and pattern? Add withal, what stumbling-blocks you have laid in the ways of sinners? How many have been offended by your conversation? And will you send so many hundreds to hell, and not endeavour the conversion of some? You pretend the want of parts: but alas! you want bowels, you want affections, you have not a real sight, and deep sense of eternal

matters : if you had, you would, with tears in your eyes, beseech your neighbours to mind their perishing souls.

Have not you so many parts as to say to your neighbours *Repent and pray, if perhaps your sins may be forgiven.* Go into thy closet, professor, and there mourn over thy hard-heartedness, and unmercifulness to the souls of thousands, of whom thou mightest have been an instrument of conversion, if thou hadst but attempted it. Or could you not have gone and beseeched your ministers to lay to heart the perishing estate of such a man or woman? Or might you not have entreated those souls to consult some minister about their everlasting state? You have not done what you could : you pretend you cannot convert them ; but you will not, you will not try whether you can convert them over from sin to God. You say they are dead in sins and trespasses, they have hearts of stone, as insensible as stones, as stupid, as blockish, as impenetrable as stones : and wast not thou so some years ago? Hast thou forgot *the rock out of which thou wast hewn*? Nay, is there not too much stone in thy heart, that thou canst see thy God so dishonoured, Christ so reproached by those, who are baptized in his name, and wear his livery, and yet not endeavour to pull them out of the fire? Thou relievest thyself with the mercy thou shewest to the bodies of the poor, that beg at thy door : when thou seest their sores, their lean cheeks, and naked shoulders, thou succourest them, these things thou oughtest to do ; but not to lay aside the spiritual alms, that were due unto them : thou shouldest have counselled them, admonished them, enlightened them ; and now if they perish in their ignorance, will not their blood be required at thy hands? O ! tremble at your blood-guiltiness.

The Lord of heaven and earth, who lays his claim to souls, *All souls are mine*, hath charged thee, *not to hate thy brother in thine heart, not to suffer sin to rest upon him, but to reprove him* : and yet thou lettest him alone, to perish in his iniquity. You are so taken up with your own temporal or eternal good, that you little regard what becomes of others to all eternity. How do some hope to slink to heaven alone ? Perhaps they *seek their own profit* ; but *not the profit of many, that they may be saved*. “ O that men would cast their eyes abroad (saith one), the very dumb inanimate creatures would teach them better ; every creature assimilates ; fire turns what is near it into fire, earth converts into earth, flowers will be scattering of their seed and scent.” How canst thou hope the blessing of the new creation rests upon thee, when thou dost not increase and multiply ! O that you would be prevailed with, to help, counsel, and direct others to heaven !

If you have found the way thither, be pleased to show others the way to life, the way to glory. O ! pity them, as Christ pitied you : Christ hath led you out of the wilderness of sin and trouble. Be you eyes to the blind, direct them the right way to the land of promise, tell them what course you took, declare unto them what God hath done for your souls. Do not you see how industrious Christ’s enemies are to diffuse their poison ? Do not Turks and Papists endeavour to proselyte ? Will they not compass sea and land to spread and diffuse their leaven ? Do not all people (besides you) labour to win to their gods ? Do unclean persons and drunkards entice others to the same wickedness ? Shall Satan’s vassals be filling hell, and will you not labour to fill heaven ? Is it not your honour to bring many sons and daughters unto God ? What will be-

come of the next generation ? How few servants (if any) will Christ have, if others take no more pains than you do, to convince, to allure, to convert ? I fear Christ will take up the old complaint, *The foxes have holes, and the birds have nests, but the Son of man will not have where to lay his head.* Consider how oft your poor ministers have beseeched you to enter on this work, lest other men's sins prove your damnation ; and yet how hath a dumb devil possessed you ? O that yet you would commune with your own hearts, whether you are willing that thousands should perish, and go to hell ? and if they answer, No, ask them a second question, Why do not you use the means to prevent it, namely, exhortation, reproof, and counsel ? You have covered over your want of zeal and tenderness with a pretence that you have not the gifts of ministers, you cannot so exhort as ministers, &c. But have you not been told that God can work by small means as well as by great, and that by things that are not, God can confound the wisdom of the flesh, and bring to naught the things that are ? Is not this like the pretence of not being eloquent ? Do you not know, have you not heard, that the issue, and event depends on the blessing of the Lord, rather than on the work itself ? Is it not all one to the Lord, to wound by a short, as by a long sword ?

Cannot God bless a few words in thy mouth, as he did in Christ's, and the apostles ? Canst not thou say, *Follow Christ* ? and may not presently a Matthew, a publican leave his sinful courses and embrace the Christian faith ? Canst thou not say, *Repent and believe, that your sins may be blotted out* ? and may not God concur with thee, as he did of old times ? *Is the Lord's hand shortened, that it cannot help ? If Israel*

be not gathered, yet thy reward is with the Lord, if thine heart were upright, and could testify that night and day thou hast not ceased to warn, to rebuke, and counsel. Certainly your memories are not so bad, but you must remember the weight of sin, and of the wrath of God: you have seen the wonders of the Lord in the deeps: you that have escaped to shore, can tell of the rocks, and shelves, and storms, which you have been delivered from! And will you let others shipwreck their souls, rather than hold out your light unto them, that they may avoid their ruins? What shall I say to humble you? There is more charity in hell than you can afford: blush, blush, and be ashamed to have less zeal, love, and pity to perishing souls, than Dives in hell had: He would have his brethren saved from the valley of Hinnom: your silence will make others think that hell is a tolerable place; that sin is not so evil and bitter a thing; that to lie under God's wrath is not so great a misery, whilst you are so slow and backward to warn your friends and acquaintance that they flee from these, and take sanctuary in the true city of refuge, the Lord Jesus Christ. O! if you know the worth of a soul, pity the multitude, with whom the day is not broke, whose forlorn souls are under a continual massacre from the bloody butcher of hell: besmear your souls no longer with the guilt of their blood: let them not starve for want of bread, whilst you have to give them. I shall bless God for ever and ever, if this your negligence of the souls of those, whom you may account without, may be cordially bewailed, and you for the future, double your diligence for their conversion.

Ministers cannot convert without the concurrence of omnipotency, neither can you. Though Satan and thy own lazy heart hath told thee,

thou art unfit to set upon this work, yet better do it meanly, than wholly omit it, God (like parents on earth) loves to see his children lift at those duties, which are too hard for them, and then he steps in and is a co-worker with them. What God did by illiterate fishermen, by Priscilla, he can do by thee. The Lord pardon thy former unmercifulness to the souls of men : but if thou continue careless and cruel, if thou wilt not by prayers for them, and counsels to them, seek their reducement, as sure as thou art reading, the voice of thy brother's blood is crying against thee from the earth. By your example before (if not since) profession, you have been the cause of the destruction of souls, of how many, who can tell ? And, as *Jeroboam made Israel to sin* many years after he was rotten in the grave, so your sin, your wicked examples may propagate the trade of sin from generation to generation, until Christ shall come to judgment. Tremble, tremble at the thoughts of it, if thou hast not the heart of a beast in thee. O ! how many souls are crying in hell against thee, cursing the day they knew thee, or their ancestors knew thee ; for that by thee they learned to sin the more, and were strengthened in their wickedness by thy tongue, and by thy life ? And now are not you bound to do your utmost to make restitution ? to labour to save them that be alive ? Is it not reasonable that you should labour to win souls to God's, as you have to the devil's service ? and to have many blessing God in the heavens for you, that ever they were in the company of such an active, zealous Christian, who by word and life was instrumental to bring them to the knowledge of themselves, and of their God ? And is it not a glorious work, to hold forth such light to the world, that they

seeing your good works, may glorify God, and you may be propagators of zeal and holiness, from generation to generation, till Christ shall appear to judge the world, and to reward you for all the services you have done to his name? O! how welcome shall that man be to heaven and Christ, who hath fed the souls, and clothed the souls, and visited the souls, which he hath purchased with his own precious blood? Christ will own thee for his benefactor.

CHAP. XXXVII.

The Disingenuity and Scandalousness attending the Miscarriages of Professors.

WHEN God had given the prophet Ezekiel a large catalogue of Judah's abominations, he then shewed him the wickedness of their abominations: *He said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations they do here.* He commanded him once, and again, and again, to turn him yet again, and he should see greater abominations. I cannot indeed promise thee, that thou shalt now see greater abominations, than those already mentioned. All that I shall now do, shall be to represent their former miscarriages in their crimson dye, and scarlet colour. And,

The *first* thing I shall mention, as making your sins (professors) out of measure sinful, is your disingenuity in so sinning against God. O! you have sinned against a gracious God: *You have grieved the good Spirit of God, whereby* (some amongst you) *have been sealed to the day of redemption.* I am bold to say, that one godly man sinning against light and mercy, doth more break

the heart of God, than the brutish sins of a Pagan kingdom. *I am broken* (saith God) *with your whorish heart, which hath departed from me, &c. And ye shall loathe yourselves for your evils, which ye have committed in your abominations.* God hath been pressed down with your sins, as the cart with sheaves, till he hath been creaked under the weight. God expected more from the trees planted in Zion, than from the wild ones in the wilderness. Grief and burden spring much from unexpected unkindnesses. *I looked for fruit and there was none.* How were David's and Saul's sins aggravated from the merciful dispensations of God to them ! *And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast not thou made the head of the Tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel, and the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, &c. Wherefore thou didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord? And Nathan said to David, &c. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and delivered thee out of the hand of Saul: And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel, and of Judah, and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? And hath there not been as much disingenuity and unkindness in our sins? The Lord hath given his statutes to us, and his laws: He hath not so dealt with all the nations under heaven: He hath nourished and brought us up as children; but we have rebelled against him, the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know (my people) doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, &c. God fetcheth a deep sigh. (Ah !) under the burden of this ingratitude: His*

spirit is laden and troubled with it. *They have provoked the Holy One of Israel.*

Misimprovements of mercies are very provoking. When God comes for bread, to be sent away with stones, must need *vex the good Spirit of the Lord.* *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken it.* Oh for professors to be worse than publicans: for they will be kind to such as are kind to them! Have not we sinned against God, even with his favours, and requited him evil for good? May not the Lord say unto us; *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath bought thee?* All the mercies we have received, *greaten our sins.* The more richly that God hath heaped his blessings upon us, the more wantonly we have followed the bent of our own lusts, and the more contemptuously spurned at his holy commandments. We have great cause to be ashamed, for that all our sins have been sins against mercy, and therefore against the principle and law of nature. It is a perpetual spot, not to be worn out by time, that of king Joash, that he slew Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, the high-priest, who had been loyal unto him in getting of the kingdom, and faithful in the administration of it. *Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his Father had done to him, but slew his son, and when he died he said, the Lord look upon, it and requite it.* And it came to pass, at the end of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him, and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people, from among the people. But alas! What engagements could Zechariah possibly lay on Joash, that may weigh with the mercies of our God to us? And yet how have we made his choicest favours as arrows, to shoot at the God that sent them? What wretched prodigals have we been, to waste all in the service of

hell, which were conferred with so open an hand, to draw forth our time, strength and spirits, in the praises and services of God.

For this our ingratitude, *the Lord may justly be angry with us till he hath consumed us, so that there shall be no remnant, nor escaping.* O that you would remember the Lord from Shittim to Gilgal, *i. e.* from the beginning of mercy to the end of it! And you will hardly find, that you (any of you) have been the better for it: but many, Jeshurun-like, *have waxed fat and kicked.* God is this day calling out of heaven to England, and to teach particular persons in it, *Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise?* I could even wish, for the thousands of our Israel, that they had received fewer privileges, or had the grace to serve the Lord in the abundance of all things, better than they have to this very day. If ever you purpose sound repentance, then take a view of all the mercies of God, towards you: go back to the time, when the first stone was laid; yea, go back to the eternal projects of God, to make thee out of nothing, and to redeem thee, when worse than nothing: review *the upper and lower springs*, with which soul and body have been refreshed: Remember how many eminent deliverances and salvations God hath wrought for thee: And if at ~~any time~~ thou hast been straitened in outward comforts, yet remember how thou hast been enlarged with spiritual graces: if God hath denied thee in one kind of mercy, he hath supplied it by a gracious wonderful commutation in another in a better; if thou hast been denied the flesh pots of Egypt, and the *land flowing with honey*, yet it hath been all made up in *the bread* (the manna) *that fell from heaven.* If thou hadst sometimes bodily infirmities, yet thou hast been *strengthened with all might in the inward man*: if thou hast been denied the gold of the earth, yet God hath supplied thee in making thee rich in faith; if

sometimes friends have been unfriendly, inconstant, or treacherous; yet God hath stood by thee when all left thee. God hath dealt with you as with sons: your gleanings are better than the vintage of the world.

Having laid these, and innumerable such mercies in one scale, now lay in the other scale thy foul ingratitude, not only that particular sin of unthankfulness, that thou hast been guilty of (of which before) but also the ingratitude that hath been in all thy sins, in thy pride, hypocrisy, formality, self-love, self-seeking, impatience, neglect of duty to superiors, equals, and inferiors, profaneness, intemperance, unrighteousness, &c. that *remembering the Lord and his goodness towards thee*, together with thy cursed returns, *thou mayest yet abhor thyself in dust and ashes*. Take words and say, "My salvations are more than I can number, blessed be God, the Father of all mercy: but my sins also are innumerable, I cannot recount them, shame upon me, O! how vile have I made myself, whilst by abuse of rich mercy, I have lived below the ingenuity that is found in publicans and beasts?" O that God would give me the success, that the angel had on such a sinful people as you are! *And the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt; and have brought you into the land, which I swear unto your fathers, and I said I will never break my covenant with you, and ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of the land, &c. but ye have not obeyed my voice, why have ye done this, &c. And it came to pass, when the Angel of the Lord spake these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lift up their voice, and wept.*

Secondly, the scandalousness of your miscarriages is another aggravation of them. Had all the forementioned abominations been committed in

deserts and holes of the earth, where none had been privy to your irregularities, you had had no sin in comparison of what you (now) stand justly charged with. If you had been only rotten-hearted, that would not have been under the eye and censure of the world: religion would have had no blemish, no loss, no considerable loss thereby: But men have looked to your hands and feet (whilst God to your hearts), and finding so many defilements on you, hereby the name of God hath been blasphemed; God is spoken evil of, whilst you have done evil before men. You knew the world was an observing world, greedy to espy all the errata of your lives: you knew spots in cambric would sooner be marked, than in coarse cloth: you know how apt the world was to condemn all saints for the miscarriages of a few pretenders to Christianity; you knew how the world lay in wait, like the Arabian for his prey, waiting for somewhat with which to calumniate Christ and his followers: you knew the tongues, that are set on fire of hell, would belch out their enmity upon the sight of your sins: you knew how apt they were to be prejudiced against you, and (as the people in Eli's days, from the miscarriages of them, that pretended to draw near to God) would by your occasion *abhor the offerings of the Lord*. You should have walked with such a good conscience, *that, whereas the world would speak against you as evil-doers, they might be ashamed*: But instead of this you have *opened the mouth of blasphemy*: you have gratified the devil exceedingly: were he capable of joy, you have furthered it, by being contented to be winnowed by him, and to be led captive at his will: The scandals of men reputed for holiness have been his greatest harvests, his greatest advantages: He hopes by the falls of cedars to break down and crush the shrubs, and tender plants, that grow nigh.

God alone knows what mischief you have done to religion already, and where the mischief will end. *Jeroboam made Israel to sin*, many years after his death. Whereas ye should have left a precious name behind you, holy exact copies of righteousness for succeeding generations to write after, you have laid the stumbling-block of your iniquity before the faces of hundreds and thousands, to cause them to fall. Give over wondering that for several years the gospel hath had a miscarrying womb and dry breasts; know, you have, like the serpent, the dragon, stood as in the place of bearing, you have hindered the birth, or devoured the child as soon as born: you have been of the old generation of God's curse, you would not to heaven yourselves, and hindred others, that would, if you had not laid your offences in their way. Perhaps some of you may think to relieve yourselves, that you know none are taken in these gins and traps: you will know shortly that he that tempteth to evil commits an heinous sin, though his temptations prove not effectual. God will not reward men altogether by the event of scandals; but by the tendency of scandal in its own nature; others not sinning after your example will not excuse and lessen your faults, which were so apt to lead them into sin. *Wo* (saith Christ) *to him, by whom the offence comes.* *Wo* to them that take offence, but greater woe to them, that give it. If God threatened to take him up by the roots, for not punishing scandals in his sons: *because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not*;—what dreadful judgments are we exposed to, who are the offence-givers? Wonder not if having caused many to stumble before the law, that God will *make us contemptible and base before all the people.* *Ye are departed out of the way: ye have caused many to stumble at the law, ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of Hosts: therefore*

have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people.

How oft have we been as unsavoury salt? and is it any wonder if we be cast out, and thrown to the dunghill? O that you would remember David, take him into your closet with you, he was scandalous in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba: it is true, he repented in dust and ashes, he abhorred himself, *made his bed to swim*, the sin was pardoned, the guilt thereof removed; a solemn absolution was sent him by a prophet, and how did God follow him with misery upon misery? He might in the death of the child, in the defilement of his daughter, in the murder of Amnon, and in the treason of Absalom, in his weeping and going barefoot, in his concubines being defiled, and his own crown and life jeopardied, in all these things he might see the woful fruits of scandal. *Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house, &c. Behold, I will raise up evil against thee, out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes; and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives, in the sight of the sun. For thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee, shall surely die. If David, repenting of his scandals, be thus punished, what will become of you, who have made religion to be abhorred? and yet are insensible, unbroken*

and unhumbled to this very day? Well may (unrepented of) scandals lie in your bones many days hence, seeing David's did, yet he roared *because of his sin*; well may you go drooping to your graves, being bereft of all joy, and comfortable looks from heaven, whilst repenting David lost so long *the joys of God's salvation*. What shall I say? O all ye, who have lost all your virgin affections to Christ, who have *gone a whoring from your God*, who are covetous to a wonder, and over-run with corroding cares, and sinful despondencies; who break out daily into scandalous passions; who by divisions, envies, animosities, overreachings, perjuries, and hypocrisy, have made religion vile! Know from Christ's mouth, it had been *better for you, that a millstone had been hanged about your necks*, and that you had been drowned long ago in the depths of the sea, than to live so offensively towards men, as you have done: because hereby the name of God is polluted. *It had been better you had never known the ways of God, than after profession and knowledge to depart, and be to as dogs and swine.*

If you had never profest God's name, you had never polluted it; but God will reckon with you about it. I am bold to say, that a drunkard, adulterer, robber, &c. doth not so provoke the Lord to wrath, as a professor may, even by an impatient, discontented word: and for this compare two scriptures. In the former there is unbelief, and quarrelling with God (face to face, as it were) and yet God passeth that by, it being in secret, with a short check, *Is the Lord's hand waxed short?* But in the other place, *Because ye believed not, &c. to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, &c. therefore ye shall die in the wilderness*, and never set foot on the land of promise. Numb. xi. 21, 22. with Num. xx. 10. and Deut. 32. 11. One scandalous professor doth do more hurt, and more stain religion, than hundreds

of drunkards : and therefore their hell shall be the standard to that, of all other sinners. *Appoint him his portion with hypocrites.* Thousands in hell will curse the day, wherein they saw your looseness on earth : for thereby they have blasphemed Christ, *as a friend of publicans and sinners*, and as if he countenanced you (secretly) in your lusts, though (for state and form) he hath spoken great things against such courses in his word. O ! how frequently have *you made boasts of God, and the law but by breaking of it, ye have caused his name to be evil spoken of.* When you should have been leading others to heaven, you have by your example lead them to hell. How deep shall their hell be, who are plunged thither with their own, and other mens sins also ? Though God should give you repentance and pardons ; yet how oft will your souls bleed to consider, how many you have compelled by your example to sin and blaspheme, who are actually in the chains of darkness, or hastening thither in a full career ? O that you would no longer be like the body of Amasa, to cause others to stand still, or go back from the ways of holiness ! O thou scandalous professor ! what account must thou pass with God shortly, before (perhaps) thou hast turned thine eye to the next page ? Will not the blood of multitudes, who perish by thy means, be required at thy hands ? One sin may become many millions of offences, as the numbers may be that shall bear of it.

No wonder that men are emboldened to sin, that the adulterer cares not for the curtains of the night, nor the drunkard for the shadows of the evening, no wonder that the swearer can cast the name of God so impudently out of his mouth : these have been encouraged by thy revolts, backslidings, careless, and seldom duties, and violent earthly seekings. O ! if you would consider, you bore the ark of the Lord : you were entrusted

with this honour, but you have let it fall, yea cast it in the dirt. O! tremble at what the God of heaven hath made a standing decree upon this occasion, *them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.* And though it somewhat comforts me, that God will wipe off whatsoever can be cast on him; yet know to your sorrow, you shall not easily discharge yourselves of the plagues, that are ready to be poured out upon you. God expected that you should have been *kings and priests* to him: you should have been like inns, which have their signs on both sides: you were of the king's-guard, you should have had the arms of the crown on your breasts, and on your backs, so that if any had viewed you, had met you, or had followed you, they might have known you for God's servants, by the stamp and cognizance of heaven upon you: but you have rather been like those pictures, that if you look on one side, you may see an angel's face, but on the other the devils. O my soul! how canst thou write of these, speak or think on them without weeping? O reader! retreat, retreat quickly to thy chamber, and spend some considerable time to reflect on thy scandalous words and actions, and how much the name of God hath thereby been blasphemed, and thousands endangered to stumble and fall through thy occasion. How many, that should have been as shields to ward off those blows of reproach, that would fall on God and religion, have proved swords in the hands of the wicked, wherewith the name of God is wounded, and whereby multitudes are in danger of perishing: yea, and the poor real Christians are even ashamed to look up, and to shew their faces, and profession to the world, because there have been such spots in their communion: such unclean, scabbed, and unsavoury sheep, that have walked among them.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

Of Professors sinning against Knowledge and impenitently; notwithstanding all means to bring them to Repentance for their Sins.

Thirdly. **Y**OUR sins are yet further aggravated by being committed not only against such means of knowledge, but against much knowledge got thereby. You have had the most powerful ministry under the whole heavens: And believe it sirs, if you had not heard *him that spake from heaven to you, If Christ had not come, you had had no sin* (comparatively), *But now you have no cloke for your sin.* You have sinned against more light than the rest of the world. You know that covetousness is a sin, and that *for the iniquity thereof God hath been wroth*; and yet you seek great things for yourselves still: you know that you are to speak evil of no man; and yet you bespatter every man, almost, to set off yourselves by staining and blotting of others' reputations: you know God abhors them, *that, for a day only hang down their heads like bullrushes*; and yet this hath been your manner from the beginning of your profession: you know your master's will, you know you should not make mirth when the Lord is angry: and yet you dare, even then to be vain and frothy. You know that the Lord is much grieved at the backslidings of his people; and yet you have lost your ancient faith, love, tenderness, zeal, public-spiritedness, and communion with God: yea, you have not only known these to be sins, but you

have spoken against them as evils: you have told men how heinous a thing it is to sin against the Lord, and yet you yourselves have *added iniquity unto iniquity*: What cloke have you for your sins?

Fourthly, You have sinned *impenitently*, notwithstanding all means for your repentance and reducement, which God hath most wonderfully vouchsafed you. The Lord hath for many years striven with you to put away your sins, and to reclaim you from your miscarriages: sometimes God hath come up to Mount Ebal, and threatened you with sword, famine, fire, and pestilence, and yet you have refused to hear from thence: he hath leapt to Mount *Gerrizim*, and allured you by all kinds of blessings; and yet you have carried yourselves stoutly and impudently towards all the offers and tenders of grace for your recovery. *God would have healed you; he hath said, wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth, turn thou unto me; yet you returned not.* You have had many of the Lord's faithful ambassadors, who have laid siege at your hearts, to engage them to the Lord, and to take you off from your sinful ways, but alas! all the glad tidings of mercy have not affected you, have not won you: all the ordinances of Jehovah have found little place in you, have left no impression upon your souls; *You have justified Judah and Samaria in all their stubbornness and rebellion against the Lord.* How righteous is it with the Lord to call upon the ministers, *Let them alone*, threaten them no more. promise them no more. *Let him that is filthy be filthy still*; you have broken through armies of ordinances to commit sin, therefore, gospel and gospel minister, let them alone: judgments overtake them, my plagues, my curses seize upon them, *Let them suddenly be destroyed: and that*,

without remedy, because they have hardened their necks though often reprov'd. God hath waited more than three and three years on you, expecting fruit : but he sees little save the clusters of Sodom upon you ; he hath born with you so long, he hath held his tongue, and said nothing (so long) that you have (wickedly) thought God to be such an one as you, so that God must needs be a swift witness against you for the vindicating of his great and glorious name, unless you speedily repent, and seek the Lord, *if perhaps he may be found.* O ! how long hath God commanded you every where to repent : not only by his threats, but by his judgments, which have begun at the house of God : What loud calls have we had ? *Turn to the Lord with weeping : let your laughter be turned unto weeping : humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God ;* and yet how stupid how insensible, how impenitent have you remained to this very day, though you have felt the arrows of the Lord flying amongst you ; yea, though you have been told, *If you repent, it shall repent the Lord of the evil he had thought,* either to continue upon you, or to bring down on you : yet alas ! where are the stirrings of your affections, the soundings of your bowels, the relentings and meltings of your repenting hearts ? O what marble breasts, and hearts of adamant have you ?

How few are there mourning for all the wrongs they have done to the majesty of God ? for all the abuses offered to the grace of God ? Perhaps the fear of hell (and so indeed self love) hath humbled some Ahabs, and made them crouch, because they would not be miserable ; but how few are humbled for their abuse of the love and grace of God by their great offences ? What the Lord complains of by the prophet Ezekiel, of the house of Israel, that they *would not hearken to the messengers he sent them, but were impudent and hard*

hearted: may be again renewed against England and all its dominions: the heart of stone is not yet taken away, where is the man, almost, that can say, *God hath made my heart soft*? Though you have borne arms against God; though you have sinned against the Lord with an high hand: though upon self trial you may find those very sins amongst you, which brought fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, and desolation on Israel; yet alas! when were thy tears thy drink? When didst thou make thy bed to swim? Is thy beauty gone away for trouble? Dost thou abhor thyself in dust and ashes before the Lord? *Perhaps in Rama there is a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning: Rachel weeping for her children, that die by the sword or pestilence, or are burnt in their beds*: Perhaps, in London,* and throughout the land, there are some tears shed for the coals of fire that God hath scattered (the last week over that famous and ancient city; but how few are mourning for their pride, worldliness, contempt of the ministers, and apostasies, for which God seems not only to be contending by the sword, and the pestilence: but by fire with us? Where are *the doves of the valleys*? all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity? A Pharaoh may so far repent, as to say, *Take away the plague*; but few cry out, *Take away iniquity*: Few detest their sins, few loathe them, few are so burdened with them, as that they desire heartily to have them taken away. Possibly sin in its effects, in its sad consequences (as it confines to the pesthouse, as it endangereth health and life, as it is the founder of graves and hells, as it burns up your houses

* Know (reader) that the author's pen had proceeded thus far before he heard of the late dreadful burning of London: the following lines shew thee what impression it made on his thoughts, and should on thy soul.

and goods) is some way burdensome, but few are troubled with it, as it grieves, resisteth, and quencheth the spirit of God, and it is a piece of the highest ingratitude, and as it kicks against the breasts of mercy; and therefore no wonder if few *are to be found mourning for other men's sins.*

Though Jesus Christ be *crucified afresh*, and *put to open shame*: though the blessed Spirit of our God be always vexed and resisted; though there be so much atheism, epicurism, contempt of God, and his ambassadors and gospel, blasphemy, violence, falsehood, pride, adultery, Sodomy, though there be setting up the posts of men, with an apparent contempt of God's holy institutions:—though all the sins, for which God *cast out the heathen*, and *cast off his Israel* be found amongst us, and these highly aggravated, and innumerable circumstances;—yet how little are we concerned therein? How seldom do we express our inward sorrows by tears and fasts? *David beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not God's word: horror seized on him; because they made void God's law: Yea, rivers of water ran down his eyes, because men kept not God's law.* But where is the sorrowing after a godly sort? Where are the weeping *Jeremiahs, Naltons, Midhopes?* or whose soul, like Lot's, is vexed, (pierced) *with the unclean conversation of the wicked*, if ever God did call us to weeping and to mourning, this is the day; but *behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we shall die.* And it was revealed in mine ears, saith the Lord of Hosts; *Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die* saith the Lord God of Hosts. When Elijah saw how iniquity abounded, how the worship of God was crushed, how things went among the

great ones at those wicked times, how idolaters were countenanced, the faithful prophets durst not shew their faces, he is so burdened at what became of this, that he knows not how to live : *It is enough, take away my life* : He is weary of the world ; weary of his own land, though the best under the cope of heaven : yea he thinks it a good time to remove, that his eyes may see no more of these detestable things, and that his soul may be no longer pricked with these scratching briars : but the Searcher of hearts knows how little we have been affected with all the shipwrecked *faith and conscience*, that our eyes have seen, how seldom our heads have been fountains of tears, how seldom we have made our houses Bochim ; how insensible have we been of all the *ungodliness and unrighteousness*, which we and our people are guilty of. Wo unto us, we have not been wounded through God's sides : we have not sympathized with a Christ crucified every day but like Galio, we have not *laid these things to heart*. And yet we have still (impudently enough) laid claim to Christ and the privileges of the New Testament, purchased by his blood ; though we never *followed Christ to the cross weeping* ; though we have shed hardly one tear for all the contempt and abuse of him, which is epidemical, which abounds from Dan to Beersheba, from one part of the nation to another.

We pretend we have great sorrows, though they are not expressed by tears, in a sensitive manner : we think to relieve ourselves with the dryness of our constitution ; and yet we have tears more than a good many, to express our sorrows by : if a relation drops into the earth, we can follow the hearse wringing our hands and beating our breasts : if an estate (which we have got by corroding cares, by neglect of duties, heart-duties, and family duties) be in one day consum-

ed, and dissolved by a flame into ashes, we then can express our sorrows by weeping and lamentation; witness some of your howlings, your cries at the late desolation by fire; but commune with your own hearts, whether you were ever made so sensible, ever so affected and sunk with the consideration of the honour, that God hath lost by you, and by thousands like yourselves? Was God ever more affronted by a professing people, than by us? Was ever Christ so set at naught, as of late times? Was he ever more despised in his person, offices, institutions, by the Rhabshekehs of the earth, than he hath been lately by them, who have had a form of godliness? and yet our hearts are as hard as an adamant. O! what grounds have you to question all your mourning for your own sins, whilst you mourn not for the sins of others? Did you mourn for sin, as it is against God: You would mourn for other mens sins; for they are against the Lord also. You would be like Ezia: *he rent his garments, pulled off the hair of his beard, sat down astonished for the sinful marriages of the people:* but we are insensible; though God be much more dishonoured by adulterers and adulteresses; by the blasphemers and atheists; by the worldlings and apostates, who swarm in the midst of us. How can we persuade ourselves that the *love of God is shed abroad in our hearts*, whilst he is so much reflected on, and yet we no way (suitably) affected therewith? If a child, if a father, if an husband, if a friend, be injured, thou art much affected with the injury: but not so with all the affronts that the sons of Belial put upon the blessed God every day. How can we imagine in the least, that we have any true love to the souls of our neighbours, whilst we behold them lifting up the heel against their Maker, wounding and destroying their souls by their sins? and yet we

not sigh ; if not weep in secret for the desperate hazards they are running ? Nay, how can you imagine you love yourselves, your estates, liberties, lives, &c. whilst God is provoked to ruin you for their great provocations ? You know one Achan brought a plague upon the whole body of Israel ; and yet his sin was secret. But we have street-drunkards, street-swearers, street adulterers and adulteresses, street-scoffers of piety and the worship of God : and are ye not in danger to partake of the plagues that these sins are crying for ? And what yet are your hearts as insensible as rocks ? The Lord be merciful to you, and take out the heart of stone. How can you be free from being guilty of all the known sins of the land, whilst you do not mourn for them before the Lord ?

Nay, to shew yet the greatness of your stubbornness, you are insensible not only of your own, and other men's sins ; but of the tokens of God's displeasure against those sins. God hath emptied us from vessel to vessel ; followed us with the sword and pestilence : and wonderfully so lately by dreadful flames ; God hath spoiled us of our glory ; and humbled us as low as dust and ashes : it is *a time of treading down*, and therefore we should weep bitterly : it is *a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds, and of thick darkness* : we have had such a plague, as never the like : such a fire hath been kindled, as never the like amongst us : the Protestant nations are very low, and the antichristian very bold and confident ; yet we can hardly hang our *harps upon the willows*, but as if our hearts were past feeling, we are insensible both of sin and wrath. O ! I hear some cry out of hard times ; but there is much more reason to cry out of hard hearts. We are too much like Gideon's dry fleece, and like the mountains of Gilboa, or rather like Jo-

nah fast asleep; though the winds blow, the seas roar, and make a noise, and we are ready every hour to be dashed against the rocks. I confess Israel was a hard-hearted people, but yet they mourned, they cried with a voice, *they wept when they remembered Zion.* So have not we: the rod of old was the only engine, by which Moses was to work all his miracles, on the rock, on the Egyptians, on the more obdurate Israel: but the rock, Pharaoh, and Israel, were sooner sensible of the rod, than we have been. How do we reproach, frustrate and defame all God's methods? and pronounce to all the world, that God hath miscarried in his design upon us? *God hath not yet heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.* It is true God hath chastised us: but we have not been as sensible as the bullock, nor so soon tamed: we have not been mended under the rod, nor edified by the doleful lectures, that God hath read us.

Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Wo to the bloody city, I will even make the pile for fire great. Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burnt: then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed. She hath wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her: her scum will be in the fire. In thy filthiness is lewdness, because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged; thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. Jerusalem shall be burnt, and why? In thy filthiness is lewdness, thou art obstinate, hardened in wickedness: obstinacy in sin is worse than the sin itself. Jerusalem had prophets, ordinances, sabbaths, sacrifices, judgments, by which God would have purged her, but she was not purged. She did not humble herself

for her sins, *the scum went not off.* Therefore thus saith the Lord God, *Wo to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it, bring it out piece by piece, and let no lot fall on it. Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved, thou hast consumed them; but they have refused to receive correction, they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return.* This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction. How many years hath the word of the Lord come to you, that you should circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskin of your hearts, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn, that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings? And hath not the Lord cut off in his fierce anger the born of Israel, and burned against us like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about? He hath poured out his fury like fire. And yet how few behold the desolations that he hath made? How many look on this judgment as chance, but consider not the hand of the Lord that is gone out against us? Do not some say in the pride and stoutness of their hearts, *the bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars?* When judgment is executed, and God's hand is lifted up, men should fear and learn righteousness; but if you will still go on in wickedness, God will reckon with you for despising him, and his judgments. I doubt not but thousands and ten thousands are sensible of poverty coming in upon them and theirs, as an armed man irresistibly: but I fear we are too insensible that it is the Lord's controversy with us? How soon was the pestilential judgment forgot? Were not men as vile drunkards, sensualists, sabbath-breakers, oppres-

sors, and unclean since the dreadful plague, as before? and others as proud and formal since the plague, as before? that arrow shot so remarkably from heaven, was soon forgot: and now that the fury of the Lord hath been upon the city (and therein upon the whole land) and the late shower of fire, I am afraid, that even this dispensation will be forgotten, at least not improved as it ought to be.

Many and many a time have I feared, that *the Lord hath poured upon us the spirit of a deep sleep*, and that the judgment on Ariel, is descended on us, like men in a deep sleep; we are not able to withstand the judgment, and like such, we have been insensible who hath wounded us, or why we are wounded: we have not considered the deserving cause, (pride, carelessness, intemperance, idleness, &c.) and what way to heal ourselves, and extricate ourselves out of our miseries? Like *a wild bull in a net*, that can hamper and entangle itself more and more; but takes no course to wind itself out of its misery. Who searcheth for the *Achan*, that hath troubled our Israel? Who sits down, and justifieth God? Who condemneth himself for pride, for contempt of the gospel, for luxury, for idleness, for covetousness, and profaning God's sabbaths? The Lord humble us; for *the bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed, and yet the founder melteth in vain*. The Lord took it ill from the men of Judah, when they were not turned by the signs he gave them by Ezekiel, When he was to take a title, and pourtray Jerusalem upon it, and lay siege against it, &c. When he was to lie upon his left side 390 days: when he was to drink water by measure, and to bake his cakes with the dung of man: when he was to take a razor, and shave his head and beard, and to burn a third

part with fire, and to smite a third part with a knife, and a third part to scatter in the wind, and to bind up a few hairs in his skirts, and to take of them again, and to cast them into the midst of the fire: when by these and such like signs, they were not awakened out of their security, when they reformed not, when they feared not the wrath and judgment of God; but said, It is not near, Let us build houses; Then the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain, which is on the east side of the city. And when the glory departed, then, Thus saith the Lord, of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel, They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, &c. And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, As the vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the Inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will set my face against them, and they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them. Such ruins were to attend them, that Ezekiel (though the messenger of them) yet must sigh, with the breaking of his loins, and with bitterness, yea, he must cry and howl, and smite upon his thigh. You may easily imagine, if God were so angry with Judah for their insensibleness of his wrath, when it hung in the cloud of threatenings and types: how much more will he be provoked to fury, if we lay not to heart those fearful signs and tokens of his wrath, now that the cloud is dissolved into the pestilence, sword, and fire? O that my bowels may sound like an harp for England! O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night! O that for the mountains I could take up a weeping and wailing, because they are burnt up; because Jerusalem is made heaps; because God's fury went out

like fire, and burned that none could quench it; because of the evil of their doings! O ye sons of men, write you the name of the day, even of the same day, the God of heaven set himself against Jerusalem this same day.

How oft did we profane that day by gluttony, excessive feastings, gossippings within doors, by unnecessary walks and sports without doors: how did we cry, *when will the sabbath be gone*, that we may attend our callings? *Shall not the land tremble for this? and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? Your sun is gone down at noonday. God hath turned your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation.* How dare you now make mirth? What! now drink wine in bowls? *The Lord take away the heart of stone, and give us hearts of flesh. The Lord pour out a spirit of mourning upon all the land, that we may lay to heart the wonderful effects of God's sore displeasure. Woe to them that are at ease, and are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall? Shall not the princes of the sea come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their broidered garments, and clothe themselves with trembling, and sit upon the ground, and be astonished at thee? and take up a lamentation for thee, and say, how art thou destroyed, thou that wast inhabited by seafaring men, the renowned city which was strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants? Now let the isles tremble in the day of thy fall. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. Desolations by the sword, desolations by the pestilence, and desolations by fire. Some smart that others may fear. Now all these things happen for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. God means not only to punish,*

but to teach, and not only the present generation, but all generations to the end of the world ! O the much precious blood that the sword hath devoured ! How many thousands hath the pestilence swept away ? And now one of the most flourishing cities of the Christian world, famous for the gospel, famous for frequency of traffic, in a few days lies buried in ashes, or rubbish. If we have any bowels of pity, let us *weep with them that weep*, let us commiserate the grievous sufferings of multitudes of men, women, and children. It is certainly now, *a time to weep, and not to laugh*. And must our Jeremiahs complain of England ? *This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction* ? If some amongst us are sensible of the heat of the fire, and other plagues, yet we mourn not, we do not habitually mourn for those sins and provocations, which have moved God to do this work, this strange work upon us and against us : possibly some cry and howl for the goods and houses, that are consumed by fire, and for their friends whom the sword and pestilence have devoured : but how few are mourning in secret for their contempt of Christ and his gospel, for controlling and checking the Spirit of God, for their spending away so much time and strength to get a little money, and neglecting to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure ? You have mourned for your silver shrines ; but not for the pride, carelessness and covetousness of your hearts : you fear poverty and reproach will be your portion ; but why do you not fear what will be the issue of the hardness of your hearts ?

Hear ye the word of the Lord, *They are not humbled unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, therefore thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Behold I will*

set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah. I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you, &c. and will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, &c. And if you will not, after all this, turn unto the Lord, read your doom, *I will make them like vile figs that cannot be eaten, they are so evil, &c.* I here publish my fears to all the world : I am afraid that our view of the desolations that God hath wrought, are too short and transient, and that some want humanity in their being insensible of the plagues and miseries of their brethren, and more want the spirit of mourning for their own and other men's sins. Nay, are there none of the race of Ammon left, who say *Aha against God's sanctuary, when it was profaned, and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate ? at least rejoiced in heart ? Behold God will stretch out his hand upon such a people. He that is glad at calamities, shall not be unpunished.* The tower of Siloam fell, to lead others to repentance. If any will scoff and blaspheme as the Moabites, by saying, *the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen*, who have not suffered more, nor so much as they : God knows how to *open the side of Moab*, and to let in the sword and ruin upon their strongest cities : And if the children of Edom, who were long ago for razing down our Jerusalem to the foundation thereof, rejoice, God will remember them, and make them desolate, and lay his vengeance on Edom : And if any of the bordering Philistines shall deal by revenge, and take vengeance with a despiteful heart, God knows how to stretch out his hand upon them, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast, and to execute great vengeance upon them. And if any of our neighbours round about, shall with Tyrus say against Jerusalem, *Aha ! she is broken that was the gates of the peo-*

ple, she is turned unto us, we shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste : God can soon stoop these mountains by causing many nations to come up against them : as the sea causeth his waves to come up, and scrape their dust from them, and make them like the top of a rock. God cannot bear it that the heathen should be insulting, whilst he is correcting his own : and therefore God hath confirmed it by an oath, that he will deal severely with such mockers. I have heard of the reproach of Moab, &c. therefore as I live saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, surely Moab shall be as Sodom, &c. And I am sore displeased with the heathen, that are at ease, for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.

Leave we these to the righteousness of God, and let us return to ourselves : whilst they are insulting, may we be on humbling and repenting work. *God is come down, and hath done terrible things, that we looked not for : we have been visited ; but not with the common visitation of all people. God hath strange punishments for the workers of iniquity.* “ And no wonder, when strange oaths have been minted of latter times, that our forefathers never heard of : there have been strange ways of epicureism and gluttony : strange ways of uncleanness : strange unknown fashions in apparel : and for fraud, cheating, and tricks of legerdemain they have fresh and new, and frequent every day. Hath not God then a just controversy with his people ? If the Lord draw out judgments that were never heard of before, and make us signs and wonders to the world, and an astonishment to all nations, may we not justify his proceedings ? If we exceed our forefathers’ sins, what wonder is it, if we feel judgments, that they were never sensible of ? ”

CHAP. XXXIX.

What Use Professors should make of this Gospel-Glass.

AND now (profesor), to all thy former sins, do not add this great abomination, that, having had the glass of the word, for faithfully revealing many of thy sins to thee, thou shouldst go away and strait forget what manner of man thou hast been. Let not Satan tempt thee to quarrel with the enterprise; for that the Glass is not broad enough to shew to thee all thy stains and deformities: know here are enough, presented to thy view, to lay thee low enough in hell, without repentance. Perhaps also by thy corrupt reason thou canst plead for one or two particulars, or bring it under debate, whether they are stains or not? But know, to the confusion of thy face, here are spots, unquestionable spots discovered, and such as are not the spots of God's children. But wouldst thou improve this (or any other such) Glass for the good of thy soul? Let God's honour, and thy precious soul's everlasting welfare persuade thee to receive in meekness and love, the following counsels.

1. Reflect on all the particulars, that thou mayest see what are thine iniquities. Do not behold only, and so go away: be not contented with slight apprehensions; but muse, that the fire may burn: consider how oft in the bill of attainder, thy conscience tells thee thou art guilty. O! ponder these things in thine heart; let the Lord hear one the more for thee crying out, *what have I done?* How have I provoked

the Lord? By meditation retain the memory of thy sins, with all their aggravations, as much as thou canst: set past sins in present view, and *possess the sins of thy youth*, as if they were just now committed: now track the abominations of your lives: charge this duty upon thy own soul, as that which must be done, as thou wilt answer it at thy peril before God and angels. Perhaps hitherto you have forgot your corrupt lives, and hearts, as you have your natural faces forthwith; but let it be so no more for Christ's sake. Consider not only how many of these sins you have been guilty of; but how frequently, and for how many days, or years, thou hast lived in some of these abominations, having oft been guilty of the same sin; though perhaps thou knewest it to be a sin, and hast prayed and resolved against it. And, because the particulars may seem little sins (though in a sense there is no little sin, because there is no little God, and sins have their accents and aggravations from the person, who is affronted), yet because it is with sin, as it is with stones, you may carry this stone and that stone without trouble, with much ease; but when many little stones are heaped together, they become weighty and heavy to bear: therefore I advise, that by serious meditation you sum them up jointly, till your backs, or rather your hearts be broken, and you take up the language of the prophet, *My sins are passed over my head, they are become too heavy for me to bear*; reflect not only on thy pride, and carelessness, and other particular miscarriages; but put all the items into one main sum, that it may stoop thy heart.

2. Away now, and present thyself before the great and holy God, whom thou hast provoked by these, by all these great abominations, and upon thy knees *give glory to him* by confessing to him as

many of thy sins, as thou canst remember, with all their aggravating circumstances. It is the same advice, that Joshua gave to Achan, tell God what thou hast done, and what thou hast left undone. *Hide it not from him* : confess to God all thy low unworthy thoughts of him, all thy enmity against him, his laws, and people, &c. Go, and confess what envy, what malice, what rancour hath lain in thine heart against thy neighbour : confess to the Lord how oft thou hast spoke evil of dignities, of the blood-royal, of the favourites of heaven, of the sons and daughters of the Most High, who were *more righteous than thyself*. Many a time thou hast boasted with the Pharisee, what sins thou hast not been guilty of : now confess what thou hast been guilty of. I know if thou art an hypocrite thou art loath to bring it forth, thou thinkest it will be a shame to thee ; but let me tell thee, it is a shame that thou art guilty of so much sin ; but it is no shame to acknowledge it. Only in your confessions take this advice. *Set your sins in order* : enumerate the several sins you have been guilty of, and though every numerical thought and act of sin is not possible to be cited ; yet give diligence to find out as many as thou canst, and spread them before the Lord.

Bring forth especially that sin or sins, which are thy special sins, whereby thou hast most provoked God. David gave a touch of his sins in the beginning of his penitential psalm ; but his adultery and blood-guiltiness lay most upon him, and he is never at ease till he hath uttered them in confession.

Be sure then, that upon a review of this, or any better catalogue, thou cry unto thy heart, as Samuel to Jesse, *Are here all thy children ?* Are here all thy sins ? He that doth not confess

a sin, hath a mind to commit that sin again. A hypocrite will confess some, nay, many sins, but there is one sin he is loath to bring forth : it is a Jacob's Benjamin, they would keep it back : *one sweet bit is covered under the tongue.* But certainly it is extreme folly to impose upon God ; for he knows every thought of thy heart, yea he knows thy thoughts before thou knowest them : he knew what thoughts Israel would have in the wilderness. David lay some while under this piece of hypocrisy : he kept silence a long time, which made *his bones wax old, his moisture was turned into the drought of summer :* but at length (though it was long first) his sin came out, *I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid : I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.* Be not like Judas : he confesseth his betraying of Christ, but there was a close sin which he would not uncover, viz. his covetousness. I meet with many who will confess such sins as are most in fashion, viz. their dulness under ordinances, their formality, their vain thoughts in duty, &c. But when did you hear professors confessing their envy at the gifts, graces, and privileges of their brethren. Paul's sin was persecuting God's church, and how ready is he to tell God and all the world of it ? A good copy to write after.

Bring forth the aggravating circumstances, and lay them before the Lord. Some confess sin, but their confessions are accompanied with strange excuses and extenuations, viz. it was done through the instigation of the devil, it was done inconsiderately, &c. Such are not for shaming themselves before the Lord ; but like lawyers, plead as well as they can for a bad cause. Avoid all extenuating confessions : Father not thy brats upon the devil, lest thy account swell even for wronging Satan, when indeed thou wast

enticed and drawn aside by thy own lust. Beware of this folly ; for know that extenuating sin aggravates it, and aggravating extenuates sin before the Lord.

Let thy confession be ingenuous and free. Sometimes conscience, like an overcharged stomach, doth so overpress men, that they cannot hold, but must out with their uncleanness, &c. Thus it is especially when the horrors of death have compassed them round. This confession of sin proceeds not from hatred of sin, and displacence with it ; but from fear of punishment : they hope if they confess sin any how, any way, they shall obtain mercy, and this makes many throw up what otherwise they would hide for ever. But O ! that you would be more ingenuous in your acknowledgments than Pharaoh and Judas were, who should say something upon the rack, when God's hand and conscience prest them down. I know what you will do upon the perusing this sad catalogue, if God do not sanctify the book unto you : you will confess sin, but not your own : you will begin to censure the person or party you do not love, crying out O ! how guilty are such and such before the Lord ! O ! how is God dishonoured by them ! how doth religion suffer by them yea, but how much hath God's name suffered by thy lightness, frothiness, pride, sensuality, backsliding ? &c. O ! run with tears, and confess all thine own sins before God. God requires it, *Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God :* and God tells you, it is a means to obtain remission, *If ye confess your sins, he is just and faithful to forgive.* Some say, *confess, and be hanged ;* but I say, *confess, or you will be damned.* If you had rather be damned than be shamed, thou lovest thy name better than thy soul : the Lord be merciful to thee, or else thou wilt lose both

when Christ shall come to judge the earth: for then whatsoever is hid, shall be published.

Let your confession be frequent, yea constant, until, at least, God hath done away thy sin. It may be you may fear your heart is so hard, that you shall but sin by a formal dull confession, or enumeration of your sins; but yet do it as well as thou canst, and if thy heart be hard, go and complain of it to God, and beg him to take away the heart of stone: let the sight of this hardness drive thee the sooner and the oftener to the throne of grace, and there lie before the Lord, till he cleave the rock, that the waters gush out, till thy tears vie with thy sins: do as our English martyr, who ceased not his confessions till his heart was melted and broken for his sins.

3. Labour to get your hearts broken for all your rebellions against God; for all the impurities of your hearts and lives. *Son of man, prophesy and say, thus saith the Lord, say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: it is sharpened to make a great slaughter: it is furbished that it may glister; should we then make mirth? Even our God hath been a consuming fire: and shall not we mourn? The house of Israel is become dross, even the dross of silver, and therefore God hath gathered them into the midst of Jerusalem, as they gather silver and brass, iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, and hath blown upon them in the fire of his wrath, and they have been melted in the midst thereof; and shall not we lament? Yea God hath been exceedingly dishonoured by hypocrisy, falsehood, breaking of vows, murmurings, cruelties, neglects of his worship, &c. Should we then make mirth? Have not we great cause, even more cause than ever any people had, to tremble, not only at the*

dreadful judgments of God, that are already upon us, and that hang over our heads, but at the hellish impieties, that swarm in our hearts? View not only this imperfect catalogue, but look from Genesis to the Revelation, and whatever filthiness was found in men or kingdoms, may be found upon our skirts : and shall we not hang up our harps ? refuse to be comforted ? Shall not we lie down prostrate before God, and pour out water before the Lord, and weep till we can weep no more ?

Tremble O my heart ! under all these provocations : and let your hearts be as the leaves of a tree that is shaken by the whirlwind. What ! so many hellish lusts to swarm in thy heart ! What ! guilty of so many millions of iniquities against the God of heaven, and yet thou art secure, light, vain, and frothy ? I profess, if I did not know what a stone I have within, I should wonder all the day long, how it is possible we can stand under so much guilt without shrieks, cries, and lamentations : I should wonder how you eat, and drink, and sleep, how you can laugh or sing, whilst God is so provoked. Can I think that man lives, who is not moved by the weight of a mountain on his back. Professor, thou hast that which is heavier than mountains of lead upon thy soul, and yet thou hardly feelest it ; thou dost not groan under that, which drew not only tears of water, but of blood, yea clots of blood, from the eyes and veins of Jesus Christ. I wonder how you continue your claims to Christ, how you can call God, Father ; Christ, Redeemer, whilst you have so little love to him, and whilst you were never pricked at the heart, for all the injuries that you and others have done him : whom you love, you are troubled for, if he be injured, by yourselves, or others : But where is your soul-trouble for your own and

other men's sins? Are not many as sensual as ever? as great servants to the flesh as ever? Have you not your feasts and entertainments as formerly? Though it be a day, wherein the Lord calls to weeping and mourning, to baldness and girding with sackcloth; yet behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: and hath not the Lord sent you a word, that may make your knees to tremble? Is not the hand-writing plain? *It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till you die, saith the Lord God of Hosts.* O! fall down amazed, fill thy spirit with horror, away into thy closet: though thou art in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity; yet pray to the Lord, if perhaps the thoughts of thy heart, and the wickedness and profaneness of thy life, and particularly thy unseasonable mirth, and fleshly indulgences, may be forgiven. How can you trade with so much guilt upon you? You have had your pleas for your covetousness, and inordinate affections to the world, that God bids you provide for your own: but what thinkest thou of thy soul? Is that no part of thine own? Is that no piece of thy charge? O! provide for thy soul: thy soul cannot be safe, whilst stained with so many thousand impurities, which were never mourned over to this day.

O! let sorrow enter into the very inwards of thy heart, and let the insupportable pressures of sin sink thy very soul: Mourn as the tender mother for her only son: be in bitterness, so as thou canst not relish those things, which thou hast hitherto followed with so much eagerness: let the loathsomeness of thy sins be continually before thine eyes: so it was with repenting David, *My sin is ever before me*: So it was with the church, *Woe to us, we have sinned.* It is true,

they were under fearful plagues : *How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people ? How is she become a widow, she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary ?*——Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her, all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, &c. She dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest : all her persecutors overtook her between the straits. The ways to Zion mourn, &c. She came down wonderfully, and she had no comforter, &c. The enemy hath magnified himself, &c. From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them, &c. All mine enemies have heard of my trouble, that are glad that thou hast done it. The Lord hath burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about, &c. All they that pass by, clap their hands at thee : they hiss, and wag the head, at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth ? All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee : they hiss, and gnash the teeth, and say, We have swallowed her up : certainly this is the day we looked for, we have found, we have seen it. The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people, is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hand stayed on her. The Lord hath accomplished his fury, he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof. The anger of the Lord hath divided them, &c. Our inheritance is turned to strangers : our houses to aliens. Our necks are under persecution. We labour ; and have no rest. Servants have ruled over us ; there is none to deliver us out of their hand. Our skin was black like an oven : because of the terrible famine. They ravished the women

in Zion, and the maids in the cities of Judah. But yet they mind not their misery, so much as their sin, *Woe unto us, for we have sinned.*

In order to the promoting of this godly sorrow, I do importune thee, with the highest fervency I can, that thou separate some extraordinary time, to humble thyself, by fasting and prayer, that God would give thee repentance, for thine own, and thine other men's sins: perhaps to this day, thou hast never observed one in order to the getting of a broken heart. O that I could now prevail with thee; for this is the means, that God hath blest again and again. On such days God hath softened many an heart, and cast out the devil of security and hardness, which could not be cast out in ordinary times of waiting upon God: Let thy main request on that day be for a deep consideration of all thy sins, with all their several aggravations, and a deep humiliation for them. O! I beseech you, if you have any love to Christ, to the credit of religion, to your perishing souls, break through all businesses and impediments, and retire yourselves, and fall down at the footstool of God, more solemnly than ever you did: if you are, by the consideration of your provocations, humbled in the very dust, be sure to keep conscience tender; Let not your convictions die, strike again and again, *smite on the thigh* again and again, whilst the iron is hot: this fire may be kept alive, by bringing new fuel to it. Labour exquisitely to afflict your souls, that you should be so foolish, so vile, as under Christ's livery, to commit so great, and so hideous abominations. Take words, and say, "O the light that I have abused! O the means of grace that I have slighted! O the little service that I have done to Christ! O the many disservices!" Let these things cut, and grave, afflict, and humble thy soul exceedingly,

from morning to evening, and from evening to morning, till God be pacified towards thee: beware lest the motions of a lazy heart cause thee to desist sooner. A patient that hath had a long disease, must continue in the use of the prescriptions, till the ill humour be purged away.

4. Let your sorrow be accompanied with detestation. See all your sins and loathe them, and yourselves too. This is promised, *they shall loathe their ways and doings which are not good?* O! how much sin have we confessed, which yet we have secretly hugged in our hearts? Labour to have your hearts rise against your pride, hypocrisy, &c. Hate sin, not only for hell, but as hell, yea hate yourselves for your sins, yea hate yourselves that you can hate your sins no more. O that my hatred of my lusts might be greater than ever my love was unto them! I wish from my soul, professors were more apprehensive of God's judgments, that are upon them, and the nation for their sins: I wish many of us were come up to the frames of the hard-hearted Jews, and expressed so much tenderness as they did, when God's hand was heavy upon them, their *sins* also were an *heavy burden: in their affliction they sought God early*; they mourned and humbled themselves very much; though with the removal of their trouble: their sorrows wore away. However be not satisfied with this sorrow; but labour for such sorrow as David had, when he was wounded in his heart for sin, though Nathan told him his sin was forgiven, yet he continued his sorrows for his great transgressions: labour I beseech you for tears of hatred and indignation, be greatly displeased with yourselves, because you have so foolishly and wretchedly dishonoured God, and ventured your eternal undoing; and if yet thine *eyes* be not like the *fishponds of Heshbon* for thy sins, take

words, and lament before God thine hardness of heart, that thou shouldest so grievously offend and provoke God, so good, so gracious a God, and that notwithstanding thine heart should remain unbroken.

5. Let there be added hearty cries to God for pardon of all these and all other abominations. Who forgives him that scorns to sue for remission? Here is your work in this day : the devil and a false heart will put you upon other work ; but this is your present work : *They made me the keeper of the vineyard, but mine own vineyard I have not kept.* But O ! do not leave the work that God sets you about. I know it is your duty to provide for the bodies of your children : but consider the danger of thy soul, what guilt thou art under, and give the Lord no rest till he hath blotted out all thy sin, and art assured that he will remember it no more. Relieve not thyself with the general bounty of God, or with the free grace and rich mercy of God, whilst thou neglectest to cry to God for grace and mercy. *He will be sought unto by the house of Israel.* Prize thy condition, that thou art alive to pray : (thou mightest have been in hell, there to howl for ever and ever). *Seek the Lord whilst he may be found* : Seek in time, before it be too late : And if thou doubtest whether thou hast an interest in Christ and the promises, because of thy hideous transgressions : yet remember the gracious words that fell once from the mouth of Christ to the Samaritan : *If thou didst know the gift of God, thou wouldst have asked, and he would have given thee living water.* Though thou art unworthy of children's bread, and hast deserved to be cast forth among the dogs ; yet thou hast to do with a bountiful and merciful Lord : and therefore be not cast down, so as to be discouraged from waiting on the Lord. It

was ill said of him, *why should I wait on the Lord any longer ? There is no hope.* I would have thee take better words into thy mouth, and say, “ Lord, I am unworthy to be the object of thy mercy, unworthy to live, worthy to be denied, because thou didst call, and I did not hear ; therefore if I call, thou mayest justly turn me off in thy fury : thou mightest answer me by terrible things in righteousness : but deal not with me according to my deservings : O ! make me the great instance of the power of thy grace, let thy mercy in pardoning be great, exceeding great, O God ! ”

Do not delay the suing out thy pardon, away quickly to the throne of grace. Remember Felix put off his work till some other time. There is danger in delays, lest your sense of sin and sorrow for it vanish and decay : blow up the first sparks of grace, lest they go out and die again : take the first advantages of the grace of God. Hast thou an inclination to humble thyself, to pray, to seek God’s face, improve it quickly, lest the wrath of God (who is highly provoked already against thee) break forth upon thee, *and there be no remedy.* Do not you know that you have lost the sense of the love of God ? But have you also lost the sense of God’s wrath ? Do not you wonder you escape ; that you are yet alive ; that you are not free among the dead ; incorporated with the hypocrites and the damned ? Will you, dare you, go on in your hardness of heart ? Will you *treasure up wrath against the day of wrath ?* O ! God forbid. Lay by the world (thy false friend, thy treacherous Joab, that hath smitten to the earth, with its kisses and its smiles). Here is a business on which thy life, the life of thy precious soul depends. *Prepare to meet thy God : wrath is gone out from the Lord ; howl, weep, cry, it*

may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord's wrath, it may be your sins shall be forgiven. Though the law be a looking-glass to shew you your spots (the laver under the law was made of looking-glasses), yet it cannot cleanse you : it is the gospel alone, that pardons. Away, ye *wandering sheep, to the great Shepherd of your souls* : great he is in affection and love to his flock, he hath laid down his life for you, he hath purchased you with his own blood. Nathan's parable of the Ewe-lamb is most true of Christ, and his beloved flock : he hath nourished you up, and he is willing to lay you in his bosom. View your great surety this day. He came under an arrest for you, he hath discharged the debt of all that come by faith to him. *He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.* He is willing the incestuous (when penitent) should not have his *wounds lie undressed*, lest Satan take any advantage thereby. If there be *repentance towards God*, let there be *Faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ*. If he hath given you the forerunner, you have his pledge, his pawn, that he will forgive you. Do not say, God heareth not sinners, whilst there is a *Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*. All thy sins cannot shut it; because it is opened to wash away sin.

6. To supplication add resolution. How can you pardon your very child, that will not promise to do so no more ? Let it be in the purpose of your hearts to neglect meditation no more, to keep up bitterness among Christians no more, &c. Enter into an holy vow against your sins. Be a thorough Protestant : protest against the world, the flesh, and the devil. It will be thus, if your hearts be thoroughly humbled for your sins, and truly inflamed against them. O say ! *what have I to do with idols any more ?* O that

you were very resolute, come life, come death, come heaven, come hell ; yet I will change my course : I will not (through God's helping me) do as I have done, omit as I have omitted. If you are not very peremptory to resist Satan and sin, not to yield unto temptation, you encourage the enemy to tempt you, whilst you are not resolved to deny his solicitations. That woman is in danger of new solicitations to uncleanness, who doth not resolutely bid defiance to the first temptation of the ruffian. Perhaps you wonder, that after many prayers, &c. your sin still prevails ; but know, (saith one) " Sin will be your conqueror, if you be not resolved to be its enemy." Till resolution against all sin be wrought in you, God will hate all your prayers for the pardon of your sins. He hath an impudent forehead, a forehead of brass, that dares go in before God, and say : " O Lord ! I beseech thee to pardon my worldliness, and earthly-mindedness, for I am not yet resolved to be heavenly-minded : O Lord, pardon my envy, and I trust thou wilt do it, for yet I am unresolved to part from it : pardon my rebellions ; for I am not yet resolved whether I shall cease to be a rebel." Believe it, whilst you do not resolve to hate sin, it is a clear sign you have not a spiritual knowledge of its evil : did you in the light of the Spirit see sin in its nature, and in its bitter effects, did you see it as utterly inconsistent with all real happiness, and as the infallible and unavoidable precipice of your intolerable and eternal damnation, this would make you hate sin, and to be irreconcilable to it.

But here I must give you this caution, that you raise not your resolutions on your own strength, for then you will soon quit them by reason of your own weakness. When you bind yourself by a vow against such a sin, take Christ

into the bond to be surety for you, to give you help and strength to perform in the hour of temptation. Augustine professed that though the thoughts of leaving his sins were once a great burthen to him, yet at length being peremptorily resolved, he found it a most easy and delightful thing to live without them. Friends, your sufferings may be nearer than you are aware of: your sands I am sure run fast, and no stop is put to them: you may not expect that *the shadow will go backward ten degrees*, it may rather go forward: you may hardly have one hour's warning before you must remove hence: how suddenly hath God cut down the cedars and the thistles amongst us? O! in that day it will be as scalding lead to thee, that death and judgment surprised thee, when thou hadst not so much as resolved to leave thy cursed rebellions against thy God.

7. See what becomes of your resolutions: how they are made good: thou hast *purposed not to offend*; yea, *covenanted* with thy God for better obedience; yea, thou hast *sworn to keep his righteous judgments*. But hast thou dealt uprightly with thy God? O! be not satisfied with purposes and resolutions; but look to the performances of them. Blessed are ye of God, if all the sins you have been convinced of, and have engaged against, be now put away: if there be no more pride, covetousness, contention, self-seeking, &c. *returning with seven worse devils* upon you. I pray God we may see (more than resolution) some real and permanent effect of all your confessions, sorrows and resolves. O! how would it rejoice my soul to see an effectual alteration in the faces, and lives, and conversations of professors! How shall I bless God for ever, if by seeing your faces in this imperfect Glass, you be transformed, and your hearts and lives be

put into a new frame of obedience ! Among all the sights in the world, none sadder than to see multitudes, that had their *faces Zionwards* now facing about to the vanities of the Gentiles. O ! how glorious, how desirable a sight will it be, to see these returning with weeping and supplication !

Here remember your reformation must be general and special. O ! labour to do as much for God and grace, as you have done for the world and self. *As ye have yielded your members servants to iniquity unto iniquity : so now yield your members servants of righteousness unto holiness.* Redeem all former omissions by a double diligence : you having idled away much of your time, had need spur up yourselves. *See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.*

But it is not only a general reformation that I advise you to : watch also and pray against those sins by which you have most dishonoured God. If thou art recovered of a dangerous disease, thou wilt generally use a good diet, but especially get antidotes and preservatives against that disease thou wast so lately cured of. O, where the enemy hath made the greatest breaches, there let there be double guards, and double fortifications. Be Tertullian's true penitents : He would not burthen the Spirit of God, again to deliver him from that sin. Follow a worthy pattern, when David had shed blood, and had prevailed with God to pardon that sin, afterwards, though he longed for the waters of Bethlehem, yet he abstains, and checks himself, because it did but hazard the blood of his captains.

CHAP. XXXIX.

Motives to make a right Use of this Gospel-glass.

AND now (to hasten to a conclusion), O that it would please God to make my words as an hammer, to break the rocks ! O that I may be thus useful to your souls ! O that somewhat at last may be hinted, that may, through the blessing of God, break your hearts for, and from sin ! that may promote your repentance for your own, and your other men's sins ! and indeed, unless your hearts be broken for sin, they will never be broken from sin ; but the more bitterness of spirit you are in for sin, the more probability there is you will not return unto sin. When men have surfeited upon a dish, and are greatly afflicted and pained by it, the more unlikely they are to return again unto that dish. "That is certain (saith Mr. Burroughs) either a man's sin will make an end of his mourning, or his mourning will make an end of his sin." Yea, if your hearts be not broken for other men's sins, they are not kindly broken for your own sins. You will never put it out of all doubt that your sorrow is right and genuine, unless you mourn for others', as well as your own sins : for it will always be objected, that if sin as sin were your burden, if sin as dishonouring God, as wounding Christ, as grieving the Spirit, then other men's sins being reflections on the authority and will of the great God, Father, Son, and Spirit, should have some considerable weight upon your souls. The truth is, others' sins become thine if thou knowest them, and mournest not for them. O then ! In what a case are all the hardened, jolly pro-

fessors, who can make a sport of drunkenness, uncleanness, superstition, perjury, &c. in others. Consider therefore, by the help of this glass, others' sins, as well as thine own, to help on thy brokenness of heart for and from sin. *Behold* (with David) *the transgressor and be grieved: because they keep not God's word: let your souls* (with Lot) *be vexed*: there are greater sins found among professors in England, than were in Sodom: let thy soul be (as his was) as in hell, as upon the rack. How can you evidence that you are translated from death to life, because you love the brethren, while you are not troubled to see them wounding and damning their souls by their sins: you are grieved to see any friends of yours in great hazards and dangers by the sword, by sickness, by fire; but the souls of your friends are in the greatest danger, yet you lament not the sight of these deplorable spectacles. God forbid that any of you should have grounds of hope to gain liberties and outward privileges by others' provocations, whilst all their sins become yours, whilst you are not humbled for them. But to lay before you some considerations, that may (set home by the Spirit) draw water out of the flint.

1. Should not your hearts be broken for and from sin, seeing sin hath so incensed God against the land of your nativity? Can you retire from the world, and seriously consider the prints of God's displeasure against poor England, and yet remain impenitent? Is it nothing to you, that God hath for many years been withdrawing from his sanctuary in England? O! your ministers have had *miscarrying wombs, and dry breasts*: Though they *rose early, and sat up late*, were *much in watchings*, and in labours, for the conversion and edification of souls, yet how sel-

dom have any been under the pangs of the new birth? How seldom were any pricked at the heart? How seldom have any cried out, *What shall we do to be saved?* And for others (concerning whom we hoped better things), how have they shed their leaf? How have they pined and withered away, as to practical godliness? How have they lost that seriousness, that heavenliness, that power of godliness, which before they seemed to have had? Your ministers saw this, and lamented it, they acquainted you with it, invited you to *remember from whence you are fallen, to repent and do your first works*; but yet *you returned not unto the Lord*. Should not this pierce your very hearts? Is it nothing to you, that not only yourselves, but so many professors in England, should lose their faithful and painful ministers? Is it nothing to you, for God to call home by death, and otherwise, so many of his ambassadors, whom you have grieved, whom you have despised and affronted, and who have been more burthened with your pride, earthliness, divisions, sensuality, &c. than they are with their present poverty and dishonours, under which they lie? What doth it portend, save war and hostility, when ambassadors are called home? And may not you fear that the wrath of God is, and will be against you, *till there be no remedy? They mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.*

If God will treat with you no more: believe it, he will fight with you. And O! who will set the briars and thorns against him? He will go through them, he will consume them in his wrath. Is it nothing to you that there is no such a spirit of division in the land? O! what

heats and heart-burnings, what animosities and jealousies are there, so that a brother cannot trust a brother? Is it nothing to you that God hath been so long contending with the land, by the sword, and by the pestilence, and so lately by fire? Is it nothing to you, that God permitted that dreadful fire in London to break forth about three o'clock on a Lord's day morning? Did he not thereby cause his sabbath in a manner to cease in London? Did not he make his holy day of rest, a day of labour and disquiet? Did not he hereby as it were anticipate his people's conventions to expiate him, and so drew them as it were off from the remedy, that his hands being loosened, he might punish, and not be prevailed with to pardon? May we not say with Jeremiah, even upon this account, *The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied, he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah, he hath brought them down to the ground?* Is it nothing, that at the same time, God should send forth such a boisterous wind, to fan and blow up the fire, east, west, south, and north, God therein executing the judgment threatened against Elam, *of bringing the four winds from the four quarters of heaven?* &c. If the punishment of one element (saith a late writer) be dreadful, as the water was to the old world; and the air is in pestilential infections; and the earth was, when it opened its mouth to swallow up Korah, and his company; how dreadful is God's punishing a land or person with double and treble judgments in one? What vengeance is that like to prove, which hath God's armies of fire and wind united? Is it nothing, that the fire burned at some time contrary to the wind, and as it were in opposition to it, and was then as uncheckable,

as when it had the winds raising and chasing it? Is it nothing that in the drought of the season, and the want of water, God seemed to hinder the application of remoras to both wind and fire? Was not therein the judgment executed upon England in its heart, which God threatened against the Chaldeans; *A drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up; for it is a land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols?* Is it nothing that the rational and probable anticipations of the conflagrating progresses of the fire, which might have been, were hid from the eyes of those, whose interest it would have been to have improved them? Did not God at that time take courage from the mighty, and wisdom from the wise? Is it nothing, that London, the great bulwark of the reformed religion, against the assaults and batteries of popery and profaneness, is in a great measure destroyed? But (above all) is it nothing, that generally there is so little sense of any of these judgments? *The wine of astonishment is given us to drink, and we reel to and fro like drunkards; But alas! who humbleth himself, and prays, and seeks God's face, and turns from his wicked ways, that God may heal our land?*

2. Should not your hearts be broken for and from your sins, seeing the sins of any one of you in particular may have been the great incendiary? This is certain, God hath, for the delinquency of one man, yea for one sin, brought plagues upon many. If any thing will move thine heart, this will; but nothing will without God's concurrence: The Lord fasten this nail, the Lord fix this upon thy soul, and let it be as frontlets between thine eyes day and night. When Achan was guilty of one sin, and that a secret one, when he had stolen a wedge of gold,

when he had appropriated it to his own use, which God had destined to another, he troubled the whole church of God: *the armies of Israel fell before the men of Ai*, the generation of God's curse; yea Joshua, their prince, became dejected, and his communion with God was thereby for a while broken. *And the Lord said unto Joshua, get thee up: wherefore liest thou on thy face? Did not Achan, the son of Zerah commit trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man perished not alone in his iniquity. The iniquity of Peor*, though committed long ago, yet raised a cloud of wrath, which was ready to empty itself upon the whole church of God for it many years after. *Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us from which we are not cleansed to this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord?* The Gibeonites (who had craftily secured their lives, by an exchange for their liberties) got an oath from Saul, and almost 500 years after, when this covenant was broken, in the slaying of many of them, and Saul was dead, the flourishing church of God suffered three years famine for this perjury. *Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year, and David inquired of the Lord: And the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house; because he slew the Gibeonites.* Manasseh sinned, and that cost the liberties and lives of many, good as well as bad: *Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great anger, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal.* Pharaoh refused to give liberty to God's church, to worship their God, and this brought unparalleled judgments and plagues upon the whole land of Egypt.

Amalek's abuse of God's people was not forgotten for an hundred years, but God took up an everlasting quarrel with them, till he had rooted them out of the earth. *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up out of the land of Egypt.* Yea, the sins of one good man, have brought down plagues upon many. David (whether out of curiosity, or vain-glory, or confidence in an arm of flesh) would needs number the people, (a little sin in comparison of what we are guilty of) yet it cost the lives of 70,000, by the pestilence. *So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, &c. and there died of the people, from Dan even to Beersheba, seventy thousand men.* Solomon was a good prince, and yet by his sins he brought miserable confusions on the most considerable part of the church of Israel, by that great revolt which it occasioned. *Wherefore the Lord said to Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant, and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.* Eli, a good man, and a good magistrate, yet because too indulgent to his children, (a vice common, but seldom considered and bewailed) what a fearful plague brought he upon his posterity, as well as himself? *And the Lord said unto Samuel, Behold I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli, all things which I have spoken concerning his house: When I begin, I will also make an end; for I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I*

have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. The blood of all the prophets (saith Christ) which was shed from the foundation of the world, shall be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily, I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation. And yet who holds up his hand to God's bar, and cries guilty, guilty! Who saith as David, when the angel foraged among the people; Let thy hand be against me; for these sheep, What have they done? We are quick-sighted enough, yea too much, to espy and aggravate the sins of others: we expect fearful plagues for others' adulteries, drunkennesses, swearing, and blaspheming: but the Lord hearkeneth when we will own our sins to be the incendiaries, saying, What have I done? And What have I done to stop the mouths of so many of God's faithful ministers, to unsheath the sword, to bring forth the destroying angel, to kindle the dreadful fire in London? Are there not such sins amongst us, for which God hath plagued much people? If secret sins of particular persons, have drawn down wrath on whole nations, why not thy scandalous sins? Say no more, such opposition, oppression, idolatry, uncleanness, &c. will bring in misery, as an armed man: but say, there is danger lest God should make an utter end of poor England for my pride, for my unthankfulness, for my trusting in an arm of flesh, for my backslidings: O! how many have I caused to fall by the sword; and how many by the pestilence? And how many have I caused to be ruined by the fire? Verily, if thou art guilty of no other sin, save pride, yet thou canst not clear thyself from being one of

England's incendiaries. O ! how was the wrath of God upon Jerusalem, and Judah, because Hezekiah's heart was lifted up ? *But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up, therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.*

3. Should not your hearts be broken for and from your sins, seeing without repentance the mercies you are deprived of, because of your sins, will never be returned, or not in mercy, yea greater judgments will follow ? Unless you return unto God, from whom you have departed, God will not return unto your souls. *If ye forsake him, he will forsake you*, imports as much, as if you continue to forsake him ; he will continue to forsake you. If you repent not, God will not return your liberties, your trade, his ordinances in purity and power, or at least he will not return these, or any other mercies, you have sinned away, in mercy : but you may expect greater judgments than ever yet you saw, to fall not only upon yourselves and families, but upon the land. Think not that they were the greatest sinners in England, upon whom the sword, or pestilence, or fire fell : Remember Christ's *I tell you nay, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.* *Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep :* And will you run the hazard of this dreadful woe ? Will you run the hazarding of perishing all, and altogether ? Is it not better to mourn now, than to cry and howl in the pit of hell for ever ? God hath determined within his own breast, nay, he hath expressed this to be his pleasure to the children of men, that sooner, or later, all shall mourn for sin, either in this life, or in the next : and is it not better to feel the weight here, than

on a death-bed, or in hell? What said a ruffian once; when in the midst of his jovial companions he clapped his hand on his breast, and cried out well, "One day I must know what a wounded conscience meaneth." God is resolute in this, you shall one time or other find it an evil and bitter thing to provoke him. And shall this consideration nothing move you? I know this should not be the chief ground of your sorrow: but yet Christ was no legal preacher, when he cried out, *Sin no more lest a worse thing happen to you. Go thou sluggard to the ant, provide in summer for the winter.* But O the great cheats that poor souls put upon themselves! they hope, though they repent not, though they remain careless, worldly, &c. yet others are not so careless as they: though they fast not, yet they hope some do: though they spend not days in prayer, they hope others do; and they hope to fare the better for them. This is like the doctrine of Rome: the Romanists teach that there are some *opera penalia*, some penitential works, that you may have others to do for you, and yet fare as well as if you did them yourselves: But for my part, I shall as soon believe that I shall be cured of the stone in the bladder, or of a filthy leprosy, by another's taking physic for me, as that I shall be saved by another's repentance. O! what folly is this to take relief and sanctuary in others fervent petitions and deprecations of wrath, whilst thou thyself criest out, *Soul! take thine ease, store is laid up for thee by others!* Alas! how dost thou know what others are a doing! Do they blow the trumpet, when they go to fast? the more likely it is that they be hypocrites. But hath not God said, *Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark (only) upon the*

foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof? And again, Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by transgression grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send a famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it. Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls, by their righteousness, saith the Lord God.

4. Should not your hearts be broken for, and from your sins, seeing so long as you are impenitent, all you do, and suffer for God is abominable in his sight? Hardness of heart is a sad disease; it is like a leprosy, that makes all to shun a man: if you had such a disease, that all would abhor you, would it not humble you to the very dust? Your impenitency makes you neither fit company for God, nor his saints: you are loathsome in the sight of both, whilst you are under so much guilt, and yet insensible of it. A tender, broken-hearted Christian is lovely in God's and his people's eyes; but how ugly a sight it is to see a daring, bold, insensible sinner, persisting in a course of sin, without repentance? *If the wicked will turn from all his sins, that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, &c. in his righteousness, that he hath done shall he live, &c. But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations, that the wicked man doth, shall he live? all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned.* And is it nothing to you to lose the things you have wrought? Is it nothing to suffer, and to suffer so many things in vain?

5. Should not your hearts be broken for, and

from your sins, seeing so long as you are impenitent, God doth not only loath your services; but he cannot take any delight in your persons, and you cannot be restored into his love and favour? without repentance there is no remission: *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* And what? have you no mind to be forgiven *your own* and *your other men's sins*? have you no will to be at peace with God, and to be restored into his love and favour? Are you content that all these, and innumerable sins more should be charged upon your account? O then! beg of God to break your hearts for, and from your sins. A broken vessel, a broken heart, will hold best the oil of mercy. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

6. Should not your hearts be broken for and from your sins, seeing your repentance will be so pleasing, and so reviving to your even broken-hearted ministers? Your repentance will more please God, than all your sins have displeased him. Though your sins have very much displeased him, yet he was loath to depart from you, he hath departed only gradually; but if you will repent he will readily return: in his departure he hath gone as it were a snail's pace, but if you will return, he will return with speed, he will turn towards you, and fall upon your necks, and kiss you, and not upbraid you with any of your former miscarriages. And O! what a refreshing will it be to your fainting ministers to see you returning prodigals? "Believe it, our chains would be worn as bracelets and jewels, and our exiles would be a paradise to us, did we see you putting your mouths in the dust, and crying out on account of all your provocations. It is your security, your seeking great things for yourselves,

your pride, your foolish expectations of our returns, whilst you, and we are so unfit for such a mercy, that is our greatest burden, and lies heavier on us than the wrath of any, save of God Almighty. God knoweth, who knoweth the secrets of our souls, that we could be contented to be banished from the face of men, so that you were delivered from the power of your lusts: *If you live and stand fast in the faith, we live, and though we have nothing, yet we possess all things,* joying and rejoicing to see your zeal, your repentance, your indignations and revenges against your sins. But wo is unto us, we fear we have spent our lungs, our time, our studies, our life in vain upon you, whilst we behold your benumbedness, your insensibleness of all the tokens of God's displeasure, by reason of your transgressions. And will you add *affliction to the afflicted*? Is it not enough that we are turned out of the vineyard, where we loved our work better than our lives: is it not enough that we are cast forth from among our people and friends to seek our bread for ourselves and little ones from door to door? But if you will have a greater hand in our miseries than any others? Will you lay greater trouble upon us, whilst others oppress our outward man, will you go on to vex our spirit? Have pity upon us, O children! whom we have begotten in the gospel: you call us spiritual fathers, you did receive us as angels, yea as *Jesus Christ*; you would have plucked out your eyes to do us good; O! now what do we beg? not to have your eyes out, but filled, filled with tears, and your hearts filled with sorrow for, hatred and indignation against, your sins? *Weep not for us: but weep for yourselves*: And is there not a cause? Your tears will be our meat and drink: a great part of our joy will arise from your godly sorrowing:

Hagar was not more refreshed with her fountain than we shall be to find your heads as waters, and your eyes as fountains of tears, and you weeping day and night for your own and others provocations. Let it suffice you that you have so longed grieved us and Christ by your security, self-love, worldliness, pride, and passions. O that now the Egyptians, that we have seen among you, may be seen alive no more! Let us not be hastened to our graves by your impertinencies and sudden departures from God. We are troubled to find still among you and upon you, those very sins, which have laid kingdoms and churches waste, and yet you secure: as if the Lord had poured out a spirit of slumber upon you: those very sins, which overthrew the churches of Judea and Asia are found among you, and will you not repent, and do your first works? It grieves us to the heart to see sins run through you, as water through a mill, and you regard it not. We beseech you out of love to God, to your own souls, and to us and our comforts, that you would *cease to do evil, and learn to do well*: be moved with fear, and prepare an ark. The old world would not believe Noah; but the Lord made them to know that he was a prophet of righteousness. We pity your souls, we are troubled to see what confidence you put in uncertain signs and prognostications, which beget carelessness and security in you, and how little you fear the threatenings of the most dreadful judgments against those very sins you have lived in: many a sad thought we have about you, whilst we see your fickleness, inconstancy, stupidity, and ungrounded, (because unscriptural) hopes. O! return, return; repent, repent, that we may be able to say, *ye are our joy, our crown, our rejoicing in the day of Christ.*

7. And lastly, Should not your hearts be broken for and from your sins, even by what may be seen in this Glass, seeing now God gives you time not only to repent, but an opportunity of repentance, and such an one, as if you neglect it you may never have the like again? "When time and the means are married and lodged together (saith one) they beget opportunity." Now time, and means meet together, to effect your repentance. If this opportunity be lost, you may never have another: and if you should never have any other, your case is desperate. Opportunities cannot be prayed or wept back again. Esau's instance puts it out of all doubt. In God's opportunity it is an easy thing to repent; but if this opportunity should be lost by you (which God forbid) it may be impossible for you to repent, God may justly give you up to judicial impenitency. "It may be God doth now by this treatise speak home unto thy soul, now it may be God warms thy heart, now it may be God works in thee good thoughts and desires: now is thy day of grace; but (to use the words of one of the chiefest of England's late alarming preachers, with some little variation), if thou let this day pass, thou mayest desire to have one of the drops of that blood, that hath been offered to thee, and yet never have it; thou mayest desire to feel one drop of his Spirit; that hath knocked at thine heart; and yet go without it: thou mayest entreat for one dram of that mercy, that hath been offered, and thou hast rejected; but it shall never be granted to thee: God may pronounce that fearful sentence upon thee, *Now henceforth never grow fruit more on thee*, never repentance come into thine heart more. If now thou wilt not repent and be converted, the Lord may set it down in his decree, that from this day thou must fumble about thy

sins ; but shall never get victory over them : thou mayest ever be mourning for thy corruptions ; but never mourn aright for them : thou mayest blunder about repentance, but never to do the work. *You shall pine away in your iniquities.* There is many a soul for contemning of God, and not taking up repentance, while they have it upon whom this plague of God is come, that they are ever repenting, but never able to repent ; ever poring upon their sins, but never able to come out of them ; they pray and pray against them, but their prayers moulder away under them ; for they shall *pine away for their transgressions.* What is the reason ? Why, *because I would have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged any more.* May not God say to thee thus ? Because I have given thee *line upon line, precept upon precept,* call upon call : not only outward but inward calls, ordinance upon ordinance, providence upon providence, book upon book, motion upon motion :—Because I have used all means, fair means, and foul means, I have plainly shewed thee thy sins by my word and rod, and by this Glass ; I have awakened thine own conscience, yea and stirred, up, as by other sermons and treatises, so by this, good thoughts and desires in thee ; *because I would have cleansed thee, and thou wast not cleansed, thou shalt never be cleansed.* Is not this a fearful sentence ? Alas ! Thy heart is very hard, and thy conscience very much seared, if the reading hereof doth not make thee quake and tremble.” What shall I say ? *Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree.* Thine opportunity is now ; if thou pass by this now, thou art gone for ought I can tell ; thou mayest be chopped off presently. O ! neglect not the present now, lest thou be cut off for ever. Thou art in dan-

ger of being presently cut down if thou dost not presently repent. *Every tree which bringeth not forth* (in the present tense) *good fruit, is* (even for the present) *hewn down, and cast into the fire.* I shall conclude with the words of the apostle, *The earth which drinketh in the rain, that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them, by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God : but that which beareth thorns and briars, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned : but, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation* (such a repentance as cannot be separated from salvation) *though we thus speak : yet therefore we thus write.*

FINIS.

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